

#2

The



A large, stylized signature in black ink, reading "Jorge Ibarra". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with thick strokes. The background of the signature is a colorful, abstract pattern with shades of yellow, orange, and red.

Magazine



PACESETTER

The *GEORGE PÉREZ* Magazine

FOR PÉREZ FANS • • BY PÉREZ FANS

Special thanks to Rachel Ehrlich our proofreader; to Bobby Nash, Gary Beck, Sam Catalina, Debra (my beautiful wife) Lewis, Tham CW, Barbara Kesel, Rick Magyar, Larry Molinar, Ian Feller and the rest of the great folks at Crossgen... and—of course—George Pérez!

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We are always on the lookout for articles and copies of artwork and photos for forthcoming issues. If you are able to provide art, articles, or both, you can earn a discount or a free copy!

What's coming in issue #3? The theme will be JLA/Avengers and will cover George's work on this massive historical event! You won't wanna miss it!

Next Issue Question:

"What is your favorite Avengers and or JLA drawn by George and Why?"

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PACESETTER

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*GEORGE
PÉREZ*
Magazine

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FOR PÉREZ FANS • • BY PÉREZ FANS

Howdy Pérez fans

Welcome to PACESETTER #2, the CROSSGEN-theme issue. I want to start out by saying if you haven't checked out any of CROSSGEN's great books, you owe yourself to at least give them a try. In my opinion, CROSSGEN is putting out some of the best comics in the industry at the moment. I actually read only the Pérez related books at first, until I got onto *Comics On The Web*, (www.comicsontheweb.com). I was able to read the various books before forking out money on a book I may or may not like — a very unique idea from this exciting publisher. I now buy and read ten of their books — thanks a lot guys, you got me! Comics on the web really work.

I want to thank everyone who helped with this issue. Like I've said a hundred times before, it's what makes my magazine. Thanks to all the fine folks at CROSSGEN, some of the nicest people I've ever met. If you ever come to Tampa, you need to check out CROSSGEN Studios; it is an amazing place. The big hero this issue is Bobby Nash; not only did he write an article for this issue, but he helped create a new feature called "Focus on," that will examine in more detail different areas of George's work (this issue focuses on George's amazing buildings). So if you have an idea for this feature for a future issue, please drop me a line, Tlorenz101@aol.com.

Once again there were some slight delays getting this issue out; the first was that I was one week late getting the info to Diamond, causing it to be listed a whole issue later, really throwing things off. I don't know what I would have done if my wife didn't help me transcribe the massive interview (thanks babe), but that, too, slowed me down. Lastly, my work really slowed me down; I've been working 6 to 7 days a week for the last three months. I got it done though, a little later than I wanted it to; a big hand goes out to Marcus and Rachel once again.

I think this issue's letter page is the best yet, some really good, helpful feedback and some great ideas that I will use in future issues. I hope the feedback continues — let me know what you think of this issue. Let me know how I could have done it better.

No time for resting, I need material for next issue, the AVENGERS/JLA or JLA/AVENGERS, which ever you prefer. I hope to make this issue as exciting as the real deal — well, to the best of my ability, anyway. I need the usual artwork, articles, trivia and anything else you may think would be cool in the issue; e-mail me or snail mail me with your thoughts and suggestions. Projected publishing date on this issue will be December. The quicker I get the material the better, though. This issue may be a bigger-than-normal issue.

I hope everyone is doing well. It's getting hot down here in Florida — I know what I burger feels like. Look forward to hearing from everyone.

Tony Lorenz



TRIVIA



Be on the lookout for the Pointing Hand or the Exclamation Mark throughout this issue for little known facts and amazing trivia!

A TRIP THROUGH THE AGES

by Bobby Nash

The CROSSGEN Universe is made up of diverse cultures, multiple realities, different eras, varied social structures, and vastly different technologies, yet they are all interconnected in some small way. Creative talent had the ability to go anywhere. A Victorian age, post-apocalyptic Earth, deep space, the realm of sword and sorcery, and fabled storybook land.

When George Pérez joined the CROSSGEN ranks back in late 2000, he was given the enviable task of choosing all of the above.

CROSSGEN CHRONICLES was the book assigned to George. Working with the writers of the respected series each issue tied into, the history of the CROSSGEN Universe began to unfold.

In his short run as penciller on CHRONICLES, George gave us a pirate-filled sword-swinging adventure, a look at the history of Meridian and the meeting of

Sephie's parents, a glimpse at the war between the Planetary Union and the Saurians of Tcharun, and a look at the magic of the CROSSGEN Universe. Of the issues George worked on, number 3 and number 4 stood out as my personal favorites for various reasons. Issue number 3's adventure just screamed fun. You could almost hear the *Indiana Jones* theme



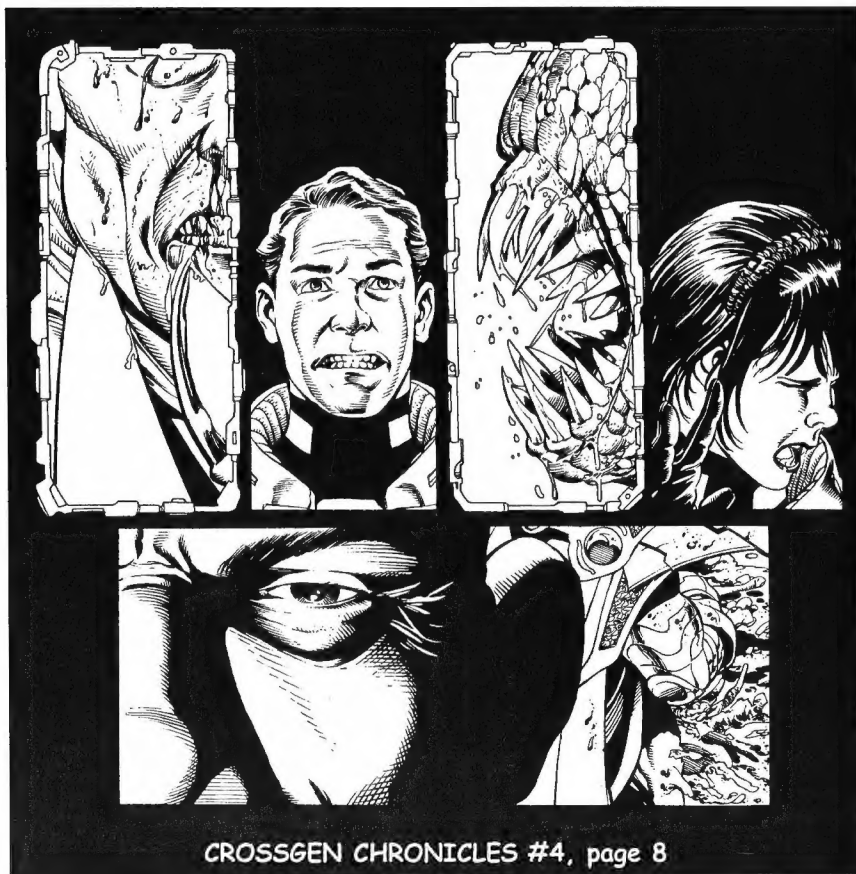
Cover art for
CROSSGEN
CHRONICLES #3

playing in the background. The transitions from Ideria's drawings to the story going on around her flowed remarkably well, abetted by the able coloring of Laura DePuy.

Issue #4 featured one of the best bar fights I'd ever seen in a comic magazine, and the issue was reminiscent in places of the sorely missed CRIMSON PLAGUE. The emotion on the faces of the soldiers upon seeing the videotaped footage of a well-respected superior officer's murder was enough to put a lump in even the most jaded comic fan's throat.

While just getting into the swing of things, something extraordinary happened. JLA/AVENGERS, a series George had been waiting years to do. CROSSGEN CHRONICLES continued onward in very capable hands while George took one last trip to the land of the cape and cowl. His return to CROSSGEN with SOLUS, while different, features many of the same perks as CHRONICLES. George will sample the entire CROSSGEN Universe.

And he's having the time of his life.



CROSSGEN SPEAKS OUT

Pacesetter asks the Creators at CrossGen: "What do you like most about George's work and what do you think is his biggest strength?"

January 10, 2003

Butch Guice: Assistant art director of Crossgen and penciler of RUSE

"I think that it's his ability to compose panels with multiple characters, and make the action clear and dynamic. Having tried to do that myself, I know just how difficult it really is, and George makes it look easy. I don't think that there is anyone else in the industry who does it as well."

Ron Marz: Senior writer

"George is actually the first artist that I recognized as being an individual artist. When I first realized that comics were drawn by different people — George's work is what clued me into that, so he was the first guy" I went, 'Oh, I like his stuff'... you know. Twenty years later I get to write a story for him — fulfilling a childhood fantasy to have George draw something that came out of my head."

Michael Atiyeh: Colorist for PATH

"I love the way George draws many characters; he puts on every page incredible details. Everyone has different expressions. One of the first I ever remember George drawing was INFINITY GAUNTLET — it really caught my eye, and just the way he handled that, all the different Marvel characters."

Mark Pennington:

Inker of PATH

"What I like most about — and I'm sure everyone has said this — probably the details; it seems like George can throw in everything without making it look too cluttered. And the story still gets its point across — not too many people can do that without confusing the reader."

John Dell: Inker on BRATH

"His ability to overwhelm you with technical stuff, just everything — he just overwhelms the reader with tons of information. When I was told that George was doing a book here and that Rick Magyar was going to be inking, I thought to myself, 'That's great, because now I don't have to!'"



Don Hillsmon: The inker on SCION

"I have always been impressed with the fact that George has made a willing change in his style and his ability to take chances artistically — and the fact that he's just a 'bad ass'."

Mike Perkins: inker on RUSE (also inked George on CROSSGEN CHRONICLES)

"I think his storytelling, his professionalism, and getting started out there in detail. I grew up on his stuff with NEW TEEN TITANS; it was when I heard I was going to be inking George's art — I said 'Oh this is great! This is great!'"

Greg Land: Penciler on the SOJOURN

"I think what I like most about George's work is the tradition that's behind it, from his long-standing runs on classic book, like the AVENGERS and the NEW TEEN TITANS. Just the whole body of work that he has done, is what's most impressive

to me. To see how his art progresses through time and to see where it is now."



Bart Sears: Art director at Crossgen

"The amount of depth and detail in his work — it's

phenomenal... and I think the most phenomenal thing is how he's been able to maintain it in every

project he's done — over how-
ever Gods many years he's been
doing this in this industry."

Dave Lanphear: Head letter

"When I was working at
Comicroft and we found out that
George Perez was coming back on
to the AVENGERS, it was like I
was a little kid again, because I
liked the AVENGERS when
George was drawing it in the sev-
enties. It was like that was one of
the comic books that I read as a
kid, and here I was getting a
chance to work with him — and I
was just a peon, I mean, I didn't feel like anybody
was going to care about what I was doing. I was
working with Kirk and George, and I started hear-
ing back from them that they really liked what we



were doing here at Comicroft and
they would find ways to give me
credit. That was just the coolest
thing. And the hardest job, be-
cause George packs every panel
with characters, and Kirk packs
every panel with words, and it
was always this challenge — it's
like a puzzle, trying to figure out
how to get all the text to fit
around all the characters so you
still see all the artwork."

Chuck Dixon: Senior writer at
Crossgen

"George is a great showman;
that's his biggest his strength. I mean, he brings
150% to the party. I think everything else in his
career pales compared to his work on SOLUS —
his best stuff so far."



How's this for a bar-room brawl?

Tony Bedard: "Jr. bird man" at Crossgen

"The thing I like about George is that little thing he does with the lip on the 3-quarter profile. I used to try to draw that when I was learning how to draw. After I finished copying John Byrne, I'd look at his stuff and say, 'What's the use?' and I'll break my pencil."

Did you know...

SOLUS #1 was the number-one-selling Crossgen book of the month, debuting at 76 on Diamond orders.



The incredible fight scene from CROSSGEN CHRONICLES 4

GEORGE PÉREZ AND CROSSGEN: BEYOND SUPERHEROES

by *Kudjo Bosu*

George Pérez has proven himself to be the premier artist for large-scale title defining stories. Having drawn almost all of Marvel and DC's major characters, very few artists have put their stamp on modern Superhero comics like Pérez. So it comes as no surprise that when CROSSGEN Comics decided to reveal the critical back stories of their main titles George Pérez was chosen for the job. Together the two forces would create some of the most memorable work of Pérez's career bringing his impressive talent a comic universe with everything but superheroes.

CROSSGEN set themselves apart from most new comic publishing companies by avoiding traditional of Superhero comics. When asked about whether all of CROSSGEN titles would be about fantasy Mark Alessi responded, "Everything that isn't about superheroes isn't necessarily fantasy. And to be even more frank, it's really all heroic fiction, the reading staple of choice all over the world for the last 3,000 years. Currently, CROSSGEN storylines cross the genres of high fantasy, historical based fantasy, science-fiction, mystery, romance, magic, mysticism, medievalism and will grow from there." (Wizard CROSSGEN Special, 2001)

CROSSGEN comics' burst onto the scene in the summer of 2000 with a one-shot book entitled CROSSGEN Chronicles launching the companies' first 4 titles and introducing the unifying element in all CROSSGEN titles, the sigil. The book opens with a barren star field that quickly becomes inhabited by majestic characters surrounded by glowing auras. They express concern over strange yet similar events that have occurred on many worlds in their universe. Five individuals have received a strange and powerful mark, the sigil, and it will forever change the course of their lives.

When CROSSGENs' first five series were underway and fan interest was increasing the time was right to tell the stories that came before the arrival of sigils. This moment would

coincide with the arrival of legendary artist George Pérez. Pérez signed on as Senior Artist in 2001 having begun work on CROSSGEN Chronicles, a quarterly title that would start its numbering at #2. The quarterly shipping schedule gave Pérez extra time to work on each book, a benefit that is on display in each of his 4 issues of the title.

Attempts to dismiss these issues as the same old Pérez were doomed to fail. Close inspection reveals precise and creative artistic decisions and a vitality that signals an artist in tune with the limitless possibilities of new genres. Many of the well known attributes of George Pérez's style are in evidence during this 4 issue run, the bold character designs, impressive layouts, intricate attention to detail and life like facial expressions. The combination of his talents and these particular stories creates something special.

To really appreciate some of the artistry one must acknowledge how each issue of CROSSGEN Chronicles presented overall challenges to be met. Each issue features a single story from a completely different world with new and old characters. Clothing, architecture, and environments play a major part of establishing the worlds of these new characters. Pérez had the task of working with already established worlds and then imagining their pasts, which is no mean feat when the foundation of the CROSSGEN universe had been so clearly defined. The settings in particular meant that George Pérez would be flexing his artistic muscle in new directions. The work completed on each issue addresses these challenges and is a visual feast deserves repeat reading.

Individually each issue has elements that deserve to be highlighted.

CC2 presented the world of Scion where a feudal society has been infused with advanced technology. CROSSGEN Chronicles #2 reveals the origin of the ritual duel that went horribly wrong in the first issue of Scion,



A pivotal point in **CROSSGEN CHRONICLES #2**, page 17 (Pencils by Pérez)

CrossGen's "part science fiction, part fantasy, coming of age story." This particular issue takes the reader from the present to the past, where two warring dynasties will bring their conflict to an end by agreeing to a truce. Ethan, the hero of Scion and a prince of the Herons, tells the dramatic story of his ancestor Edvin, Admiral of the Heron fleet and the battle he fought which ended the Heron/Raven war. Not just a war story, this tale features a massive nautical battle and a dramatic showdown all within a techno-fantasy setting. As far as settings go, this is about as far from a typical superhero story as one can hope to begin with. Pérez proved to be more than up to the challenge. ■

Clearly designed in an eye-catching fashion, **CROSSGEN Chronicles #2** features a

stunning cover that captures the struggle between the Heron and Raven dynasties. The layout strongly juxtaposes the images of the 2 rival Admirals within a centralized image of the sigil, which itself resembles a yin and yang symbol. The layers of imagery expand from the central ship battle, within the sigil, and then outward to the downward facing heads of the book's hero Ethan on the left and his arch-nemesis Bron on the right. The outward extension of the action on the cover can be seen as impacting the characters on the border as they contemplate the future. On the edges but no less important are the respective family crests which serve to complete the symmetry of the image. This is a cover that demands attention.

Pérez' interior work on this issue has a distinct and cinematic quality. The images flow



Edvin's profile combined with the prow of the ship from CROSSGEN CHRONICLES #2, page 7 (Pencils by Pérez)

so well that it takes time to notice that each panel is carefully chosen. In the first few pages of the story he uses a familiar close up on an object to transition from the present to the past. (Pg. 3-4) Several panels are used to close in on Ethan's sword and then drawback on the original sword in the past sheathed at the side of his ancestor Edvin. That same technique is used at the end of the story to book end the tale and return it to the present, this time with an opposing blade forcible taken from a glass display and then grasped in the hand of Bron. To display the advance of an enemy ship Pérez creatively uses 4 circle panels to stand as P.O.V images seen through a telescope. (Pg. 6) All these subtle choices are the mark of an artist who seems to be truly enjoying the work.

As well as drawing what this author believes to be his first nautical battle, Pérez creates some very striking page layouts. As Ad-

miral Edvin commands his ship to prepare for battle, Pérez uses 2 successive panels of Edvin in profile to create an ominous half page image that combines Edvin's profile with the bow of the lead ship. (Pg. 7) The hectic nature of a ship battle is captured in the beautiful 2-page spread on pages 10-11. Edvin is kept central in the page and the rest of the action surrounds him. No detail is spared as the 2 ships pound away at one another. The effect is an intense page that is difficult to quickly flip past. These pages are surpassed only by the following pages where the lead Heron and Raven ships collide with destructive force. Amidst this chaos each character can be observed in great detail. The climax of the stories growing intensity occurs with yet another 2 page spread this time Edvin rallies his troops with the cry "For King and Kingdom!" dramatically swinging into action with sword drawn. These are

only a few of many examples of inspired layout work from Pérez' first CROSSGEN work.

Without missing a beat CROSSGEN Chronicles #3 pushes into even more new territory, which Pérez illustrates with relish. CC3 features the world of Meridian, a world inhabited by floating islands and sky ships. On the planet Demetria most inhabitants live above the toxic surface of the world on floating island-cities. Sephie, the young heroine of Meridian and sigil bearer is attempting to deal with adolescence and her strange new powers. The death of her father Turos, which gave her the sigil, leaves her to carry on as Minister of Meridian, an important ship building island-city. Her power hungry Uncle Ilahn is a sigil bearer as well and has designs on ruling Meridian in addition to the neighboring island-city of Cadador. The story is a romantic adventure that sheds light on the courtship of Sephie's parents, Ideria and Turos, and the enmity it gained from her uncle Ilahn.

Pérez captures the perfect tone with the radiant cover of CROSSGEN Chronicles #3. Similar to the cover of CC#2, the major elements of the story are on display. Sephie is drawn seated with a serious expression on her face; a scroll unfurls behind her and grows in size revealing events from the past. The images on the scroll appear to be un-inked and in stark contrast to the rest of the cover. This clever presentation of story elements in covers is one of the great skills Pérez brings to his work. In this instance the scroll plays an important part of the story and the stylistic choice for the cover is repeated in the interior story. Sephie's mother, Ideria is an artist and much of her artwork is presented in the same colored and un-inked fashion.

Essentially a romance, most of the strength of the story takes place in the facial expressions of the characters. Within a few panels the Pérez establishes the feelings of the soon to develop love triangle. Turos' surprise and excitement at meeting Ideria spills over in a panel that barely contains his face. Ilahn's first meeting with Ideria carries none of that surprise; his face displays a warm but self-satisfied grin. Page 12 features one of the best ex-

amples of facial expressions. Ideria must decide what to do after the death of her parents. In 6 panels her options unfold. Turos, wide eyed and optimistic, inhabits panel 1. His longing and love are apparent in his eyes. The next three panels focus on Ilahn and draw closer and closer to his face until only the eyes are center panel. Ilahn exudes confidence but not love, more intense devotion, possibly obsession. Turos's father appears in the final 2 panels. He turns from a 3/4 view and ends facing away from Ideria. He believes that even though she loves his son, their relationship may not be the best thing for Meridian. The stern look on his face shows that the comments he makes are important and no less easy to say.

The combined power Barbara Kesel's script and George Pérez's art has created a story that tells it self so well words are only necessary to explain the details.

Even with the focus on personal relationships, the book has much more to offer visually. Later in the book, Turos and Ideria journey to the surface to visit the caverns that contain the ore that makes the island-cities and ships float. On their descent they encounter a horrific multi-eyed sea creature. Pérez renders the creature with such detail that it adds to the menace. The whole sequence is punctuated with dramatic panels as the crew fights to save their ship from the attack sea creature. A favorite panel of mine features Turos preparing to harpoon the creature; the figure and face are reminiscent of a Gil Kane panel. Also of note are some excellent scenes in the underground caverns near the end of the issue.

By issue four Pérez is easily in a groove seamlessly moving to a new subject Sigil, a series set in the midst of inter stellar war between 5 human worlds and a lizard like alien race. Revealed for the first time is the origin of the fierce vendetta that exists between Samandahl Rey, a human, and Tchlusarud, a Saurian. Pérez had mentioned at conventions that this was his "Starship Troopers" story. The artwork lends an early sense of levity as the platoon gets wrapped up in a bar fight, brought to life in another manic Pérez 2-page panel. Events take a turn for the worst when the pla-

toons' Sergeant is viciously killed in a conflict with the Saurians. Carefully chosen panels do not reveal the Saurians but the reaction to the atrocities on display is clear as day on the faces of the troops. In just a few heads shots the emotion shifts from disgust, to horror and then determined resolve to face the enemy.

The major action piece for the story is a battle on the Saurian homeworld. Pérez launches an almost 20 page assault on the senses as the platoon lead by Sam engages the Saurians. Characters engage in John Woo-style armed heroics as the jungle surroundings explode in flames. A classic war scene is given futuristic feel in a few panels. On page 16 the platoon has begun to retreat in a couple of 2 person panels the troops are seen resting undercover, discussing there crazy situation, almost like a scene from a WW II comic. The action reaches a fever pitch when Saurian Tehlusarud springs from his hiding place and engages Sam. Sam is alerted to his enemy by a snapping branch. Pérez draws that into a panel shaped like the word snap. Fully engaged the 2 opponents trade blows for several pages, which Pérez strings together, like a dance. It would not be an overstatement to say that this is combat like never seen before in a CROSSGEN book.

The final issue of George Pérez's run on CROSSGEN Chronicles's features the magical world of Mystic, which he renders with lush large panels, spectacular magic effects and a deceptively complex cover. On planet Ciress, a world where magic is commonplace magic guilds rule. Giselle Villard, a young woman with no aspirations toward magical study has

suddenly become the most powerful Mystic her world has known. She has been given a sigil, which in turn has attracted the eternal spirits of all the magic guilds. Her new powers come just in time to protect the world from the return of Animora, a powerful evil being. The true origins of Animora and the magic guilds original battle and its consequences have remained unknown. Until now....

The cover to CROSSGEN Chronicles #5 is astonishing. The malevolent being Animora is attempting to free herself from a mystic seal that is ringed by magic guild members attempting to maintain it. Animora's face jumps off the cover in a way that seems almost three-dimensional. While that image takes up nearly 3/4 of the cover there is a large character in the background. A stunned Giselle's open palm is thrust forefront to reveal the magical combat. A multilayered masterwork, this may just be the best of the four covers.

Pérez may have saved the best for last because the interior pages are just as dynamic as the cover. Exhaustive detail is applied to simple items like books and backgrounds even incorporating some classic "Pérez rubble." Another clever transition is used to take the story into the past. As Giselle drifts in to magic trance a magic symbol covers her eye and each panel closes in on it until only a planet is visible. The next page is a poster-like two-page spread featuring all the guild masters in combat and distinct panels on opposing sides of the pages to name them and the guilds they control. A layout like this conveys a lot of information in an exciting manner.

Two major events set the artistic style for



Full-throttle attack by the Saurians from CROSSGEN CHRONICLES #4, page 16.

the issue. In the past, the guilds were in constant combat with one another but somehow two guild masters fall in love, Nalia of Taroc and LeCavalier of Nouveau. Nalia derives her powers from cards, which Pérez potently illustrates on page 6. She is shown from the side with arms extended and energized cards spring from her open palm and are cast from her other hand. The cards circle an image of the secret lovers. Each guild member has a specific graphic style that represents the manifestation of their magic powers. These cool effects are seen throughout the issue and are used dramatically during the final confrontation with

Animora. The second event is the large than life arrival of Animora. Her awakening takes three ominous pages implying the immense power she wields to form a citadel from nothing. When she finally reveals herself Pérez devotes a full page to her. Although not her first comic appearance it does cast her as sensual as well as evil in a way previous appearances didn't. The large scale power of Animora and the powers of the magic guild clash in the end in a fantastic finale. One that needs to be seen to be believed.

The union of CROSSGEN comics and George Pérez produced 4 amazing issues

bringing to light early important events in the CROSSGEN universe and expansive new artwork. Leaving superheroes behind Pérez dives into the new worlds of Scion, Meridian, Sigil, and Mystic using his classic talents to bring to life different genres. In addition to world-creating design work, fans are given all new settings. With a cinematic flair we see nautical battles, blossoming romances, interstellar war, titanic magic battles and more. Pérez also gives some of the best CROSSGEN covers ever.

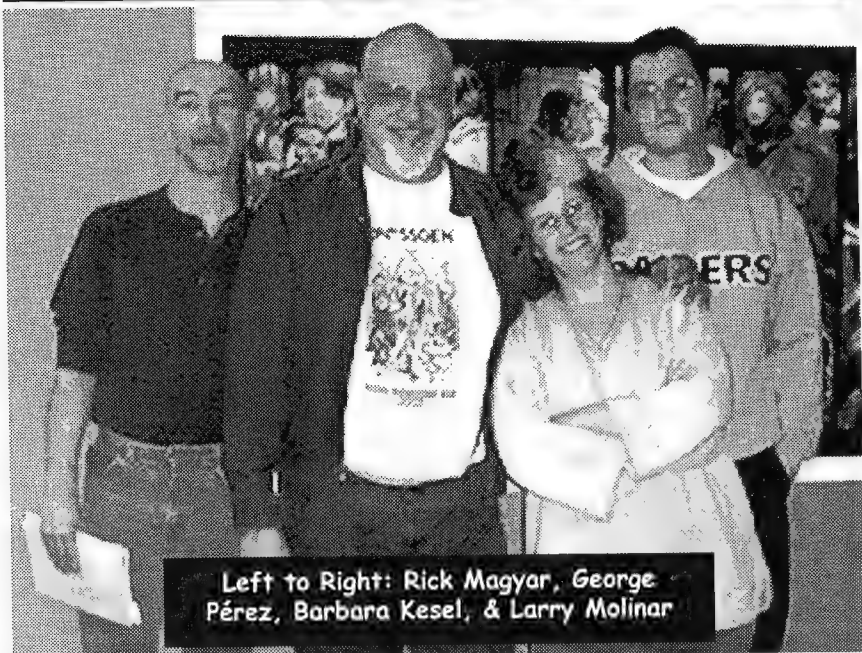
Although CROSSGEN Chronicles #5 would prove to be Pérez last CROSSGEN work for over a year, he has recently returned to the line with Solus. If his previous CROSSGEN work is any indication fans will continue to see more stunning work from Mr. Pérez. I for one can't wait!



George's amazing cover for CROSSGEN CHRONICLES #5

SOLUS INTERVIEW

by Tony Lorenz



My name is Tony Lorenz (TL) and I publish a magazine called PACESETTER (formerly known as the GEORGE PÉREZ NEWSLETTER). Issue two focuses on George and his work at CROSSGEN, and more specifically, on George's new book, SOLUS. PACESETTER not only has the pleasure of interviewing George once again, but we have the entire creative team of SOLUS this issue: George Pérez (GP), Barbara Kesel (BK), Rick Magyar (RM) and Larry Molinar (LM). The interview is joined later by Sam Catalina (SC).

TL: *This is a rare treat; having not only George Pérez, but also the entire creative team of CROSSGEN's new book SOLUS.*

GP: You are the first person to have the whole creative team of the book for an interview.

TL: *That makes it even more special.*

Let's start out giving the readers of

PACESETTER a little background about yourselves. I've published four issue so far and have interviewed George Pérez in each of the issues, so the readers of my magazine know a lot about George, but they may not know as much about the rest of the creative team of SOLUS. Let's start with you, Barbara. Where are you from? How long have you worked in the comic industry? What are some of the things that you have worked on? What are some of things that you are proud of? Least proud of?

BK: Let's see, I've been in the comic business since 1981. I was a theater major and through correspondence with Dick Giordano I got a job offer at DC Comics, where I came in as an associate editor working on the TITANS. My first week in the office I had to call up the god of comics—George Pérez—to find out where he had gotten a photo of New York that he used for the background painting of Azrael. (NEW TEEN TITANS vol. 2, #7)

TL: *I think I read that somewhere.*

BK: That phone call took me an hour to make because I had to get the nerve to pick up the phone to tell him that he might have done something wrong.

GP: That was a rare time that I used a photo cover. Everyone else was using it and so I had no idea that the photos of course had certain copyright that has to be respected, so I just figured everyone lifted them out of magazines—which I did—and of course Barbara got caught in a situation where she had to tell me we can't use that photo.

BK: Then I spent the next eight hours in New York's Tourist and Visitors Office finding another photograph shot from the same angle so we could just drop it in, which was a really fun, exciting, and interesting introduction to the world of comics. I worked for four and a half years at DC Comics as an associate editor on various projects, but worked on the TITANS the entire time and then I went freelance. I had to get out of New York. I ended up in Oregon, and after a while freelancing, I took a job offer from Dark Horse Comics. I was the fifteenth employee—that was when we were still making our art by hand. They grew around me; it got to a point where I didn't have anything to do. I sat around bored half the time, and they had kind of gone a little too corporate for my liking, so I went freelance again, and then ran into this crazy guy trying to start his own comic company in San Diego. I'm still not quite sure how I got hired here because I wasn't going to work here, then one day I woke up in Tampa. I stayed in touch with George. We tried to work together on a project when I was at Dark Horse Comics and that never quite happened.

GP: Including that fact that BK was the editor of the aborted TITANS graphic novel, pretty much the third plotter on the book.

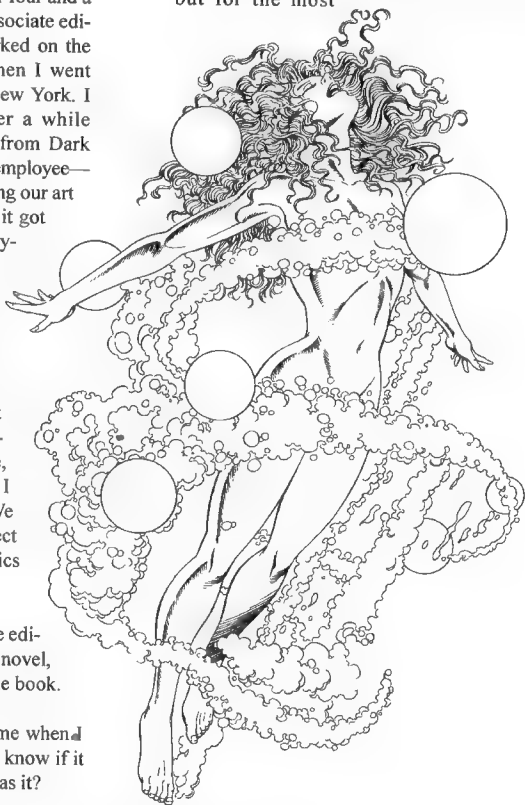
BK: We stayed in touch that whole time when I got down to CROSSGEN. I don't know if it was me that initially called you, was it?

GP: You were the one who called me to come work at CROSSGEN.

BK: We enticed him to work on CHRONICLES, promising him that he could work on the entire CROSSGEN Universe. From there, when George decided to do a monthly series we set him up.

TL: *Rick?*

RM: I also started working in the comic business in 1981, initially as a background inker. After about a year or so I started getting assignments from both Marvel and DC Comics. I went back and forth between the two companies, like most people living and working in New York throughout the 1980s. I'm originally from Akron, Ohio, and at various points, I've worked for virtually every comic company out there (with a couple of exceptions), but for the most



part, covered all the bases with all the companies. Actually, before I had broken in, one of my samples had a connection with George. I had done some sample inks over photocopies of some TITAN pages, back in the old days when we did inking samples on vellum overlays.

TL: *Do you still have them?*

RM: Probably buried somewhere; they might still be in Ohio in my old closet.

So it's almost like coming full circle now; after twenty-some years since I had done those samples, I found myself working with the legend, as it were. Honing my skills, working with practically everybody out there at different times. Eventually I was offered a position at CROSSGEN—just over two years ago—and made the decision to come here, and haven't regretted it. I consider the work I have done at CROSSGEN, primarily on CRUX, to be the best work of my career—primarily because of the way we work, collaboratively. We are right near each other, working together.

TL: *That's what I like—the way CROSSGEN is set up, different than any other company out there.*

RM: This studio has made for some of the best collaborations I've ever been involved in, in the twenty years in the business.

TL: *Larry?*

LM: I'm from East Los Angeles; I started in comics in 2000, actually not too long ago. I was a graphic artist and I went to school in East Los Angeles; after graduating, I then got into TV and movies, working for Warner Brothers Studios as a PA. From there, I got on to Wildstorm Studios, where I got to work with Jim Lee. I worked on various BATMAN and SUPERMAN titles for DC Comics, and then a lot of friends came over to CROSSGEN, praising the company, saying it was a great company to work for—and given the opportunity, I could work with George on his new book—so I jumped on.

TL: *Is this your first work for CROSSGEN?*

LM: Yes it's my first work for CROSSGEN.

TL: *Wow!*

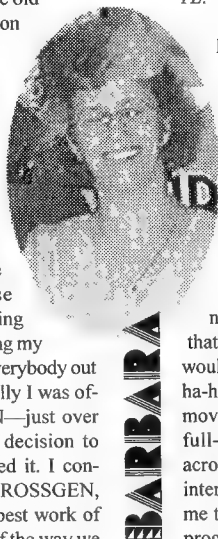
BK: Pushed into the deep end of the pool.

TL: Barbara, were you one of the founding members of CROSSGEN? Can you go into a little more detail on how Mark got you to work for CROSSGEN?

BK: In San Diego in 1999, I ran into somebody who told me that there was a new company that was looking for me, that wanted me to come as an editor, but I would have to relocate to Florida. I said, "Ha-ha-ha, tell them I'm not interested, I'm not moving to Florida, and I'm not going back to full-time work." Then I happened to run across their booth, and I told them I wasn't interested, but at the same time they asked me to take a look over their whole business program. I looked over all the information they had, and since I had no interest in the job, I was pretty rude and brutal about what I thought were the failings of the system they were setting up. I thought it was largely based on interviews with Image artists, so it was very anti-editor and anti-writer without understanding how those jobs work and how they could be done well. You've got to get the writer the hell out of there and put them behind an office with a door, because they will not be able to get work done—either because of the other people, or they will continually disrupt all the other people. So put them away, hide them in boxes.

GP: Which is how I always react to writers.

BK: And the next day I ran into Mark Alessi, who had said they had hacked over the comments that I had made and he went over each point that I made, told me why they decided to change and adopt it or why they had decided not to, but I felt a "wow" instantaneous response—they listened, they considered, and they evolved. That became very intriguing, so he invited me to fly out to Tampa, which gave me the impression that I was one in fifty



or so people for the job I got, when in fact I was the only person. It was kind of a creepy, eerie situation to find myself in, but we decided to make the jump. We temporarily relocated out here for the first couple of years to see how it went before we would settle permanently.

TL: *Pretty scary jumping on to a new untested company.*

BK: Exactly—because it was Florida, kind of in the shadows of Tekno Comics. So there was the whole question of would they succeed, could they really pull off what they wanted to do; but I hit Mark with the rudest questions I could to determine how well he had thought this through, and I really liked his answers. I felt that he actually had a very strong businessman's view of what was wrong with the industry and what could be done to fix it. For instance, the fact that all the writers and artists are all here in-house reflects what is wrong with the comic book industry: the philosophy. The use of freelancers by the companies creates employees they have no responsibilities for—no benefits, overhead, or retirement. Most of the CROSSGEN employees here are the creative staff; we have a very stripped-down administrative staff—



we have no one here to make our photocopies for us. Because of that, the money is going straight to the creative people—who also have a financial stake in the company doing well—so you create the ultimate win/win scenario. I will do well if my books do well; I'll do better if Ron's, Chuck's, and Tony's books also do well. It makes for an extremely strong working relationship. Even though you stick a bunch of people in one box, you're always going to have personal friction pop up on some level, because of different working styles, different social patterns, and all. But for the most part, if you look at the turnover rate of most companies, we have a phenomenally low turnover rate. We are doing more things right than we are doing things wrong, as we invent a new way of doing it. If you give the creators more say in the product, you have a better product, which we are also showing. We sometime incorporate marketing concerns into our books, but we are not ruled by marketing concerns; if something gets too much in the way, we have an opted-out move-around program. For instance, we have this key issue deal in which we spotlight one of our titles each month, using it as a device to see if we can draw new people in. Well, that welcoming nature the writers are putting into the story makes it accessible to new readers, but the overriding concern is that it must not interfere with that issue as part of the series.

TL: *This is question for everyone. I think Barbara answered her part. What do the rest of you feel makes CROSSGEN different than other companies in the industry?*

BK: They pay on time.

GP: Probably a regular salary that is deposited in your account is a change of pace to sometimes having to wait a significant amount of time for a paycheck—and if paperwork is lost, you may wait even longer. Health coverage that is offered here is very important; it can be very expensive for a freelancer. When I first decided to come to CROSSGEN, people would ask why I would give up the superstar status, but since I've come to CROSSGEN I have been treated—like everyone else—as

even more of a superstar, due to the fact that the creative people are what make up CROSSGEN, and without the creative people there would be no comic industry. In the freelance community—despite the fact that my book sells—there is a loyalty code that measures how well my book sells. There is still that niggling fear that the company will consider you dispensable because their properties are more important than the people putting them out—and you can be changed as long as the property exists. CROSSGEN is a firm believer that the properties exist because the right people are doing them; they are so intertwined you can't say, "We got these characters, anybody can make them sell." No, they are successful because we put the right people there. One of the great things about working on SOLUS was that I was given input on who my team would be, who I wanted to work with. Larry was the only one who I wasn't familiar with, but when I saw his work I was sold immediately. Rick and I have talked about working together for some time, and Rick had done some inking on my pencils on CROSSGEN CHRONICLES. Barbara and I have been talking about working together for many, many years, so this was a dream come true. I feel that I am treated with great respect, but not at the expense of everyone else. That's the reason I'm doing a monthly book; my agreement when I came over was to do a quarterly book—I was doing one third of what everyone else was doing and I didn't think that was fair. I was being paid good money, making a good salary, but if I wanted to be part of the CROSSGEN team, I had to work as hard as the CROSSGEN team. And that's what inspired me to do a monthly series. Also, Mark's incredible work ethics; Mark comes in like a bull in a china shop sometimes—he's honest, forthright, and always thinking about the good of the company, which also means the good for everyone who works for the company and the fact that the buck always stops with him. I don't have to go through an editor, who then would have to go through the publisher's man in charge, and then have to go through the board of directors, and basically getting a room full of people nodding their heads. This is a very slick, well-run organization whose goal is not only to publish good comics, but to increase comics presence in different avenues.

TL: *I think CROSSGEN really stands out among the other publishers.*

GP: Plus the fact my wife loves that I'm doing fantasy books.

RM: I pretty much concur with everything that George has said relating to the dynamics of the studio here at CROSSGEN, like regular pay checks—we are all salaried employees, we all have a vested interest in the company. Like Barbara said earlier, if all the books do well, there is a friendly competition—we post our artwork on the wall to show what the other teams are doing, and that forces us to raise the bar on ourselves, and in turn on everyone else. That's one of the keys; Mark said the creators are the people driving this industry, so we should be making the decisions—as opposed to people in offices who don't do the comics farming it out to freelancers, keeping the creators at arms length rather than involving them much more in every aspect of the production of the comic. We're involved in the ads, we have input in promotions, different things that come up—we all jump on board and say, "Let's all do it for the company."

TL: *A family atmosphere.*

RM: And as in any family, there are tensions occasionally, but that is perfectly normal. We still have a very high retention rate of 95–97%, which is very unusual in most businesses. Personally, I like the atmosphere; we have a great group of people and we all generally respect each other, and I think that is a big key to it. The people who have been brought into CROSSGEN are very special people who came from the freelance community and are some of the most professional people that I have met—and some of the most honest people as well. Having people like that around you encourages you to do your best work. Another plus is that, while we do have many seasoned veterans working here, we are also bringing in newer people and shepherding them along, incorporating their input. At the same time, some of the young guys can inspire the veterans, bringing in new ideas. We play off each other, so there is no pecking order. There is a nice interplay between all the people here, pretty much.

TL: *I think from what I've seen here at CROSSGEN, with the bullpen type atmosphere, you can really learn from the artists around you because you can walk around the studio and see other styles.*

RM: We've been compared in some cases to other situations in the past; the Marvel bullpen, Eisner studios of the 1940s, or the Disney studios. I think that this situation is unique at CROSSGEN. In the sixty-seven years of the comic book industry, I don't think any comic company has done it this way; despite the fact that you did have a Marvel bullpen with a handful of people in the Marvel offices, they were still farming out to freelancers. But the situation at CROSSGEN has never been done before, and we are doing it successfully as well.

GP: In fact, that's one of the things I've found rather eye-opening at CROSSGEN. I remember when I was a fan; the first time I ever went into a comic company office, I realized how few people worked there. When I first came to CROSSGEN, it was half the size it is now. Everyone at CROSSGEN is here because it's exactly where he or she wants to be more than anywhere else. This is pretty much what I imagined what a comic company was, back in the 1960s and 1970s when I was reading comics—where everyone is working together, everyone is working for the sheer love of doing comics, like one controlled party. And now it's coming full circle; I'm home.

BK: That's true, because people would come through Dark Horse and ask where were the writers and artists, and they weren't there.

TL: *My son and I recently took a tour of CROSSGEN and we were blown away; this place is pretty amazing.*

LM: Going along with Rick and George, I've never felt so important—as is important as the inker and the penciler, really feeling like part of the creative team. I actually get to give my creative input about the characters, establish the

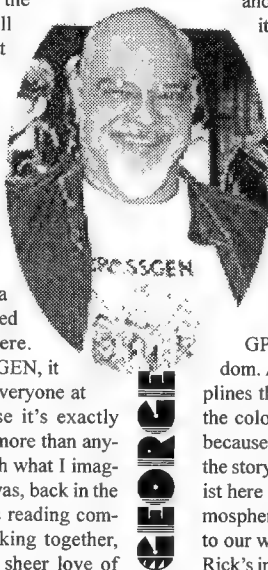
way the book is going to look. I've never had that before; not working at Wildstorm or freelancing.

TL: *Something that I've noticed at CROSSGEN that I haven't noticed at any other company is that the colorist gets actual cover billing right along the writer, penciler, and inker. You don't see that at Marvel or DC, or any other company. The colorist seems to be always playing second fiddle.*

BK: Historically, that's because the colorist wasn't much an artist in relationship to the penciler and the inker at the time, it was right that it was credited that way. But with the advent of computers and what you can do on computers, it's now much more a legitimate art form than before, when the colorist's job was to just put colors down for the ease of identification of the different characters.

TL: *Still, Marvel and DC don't give the colorists the credit they deserve.*

GP: Not only credit, but creative freedom. As Rick pointed out, of all the disciplines that have flourished at CROSSGEN, the colorists have made the biggest strides, because they are such an important part of the storytelling. Larry, like every other colorist here at CROSSGEN, is there to bring atmosphere—to bring a sense of greater light to our work. I've seen my pencils, I've seen Rick's inks, and then Larry gets a hold of them and makes the art sing like it's never sung before, because he's added so much to it—and a lot of that is the atmosphere that CROSSGEN provides. Also, if you notice, SOLUS is the only book Larry is coloring; creative teams are not thinned out, so we're not forced to do less than our best work to meet deadlines of having more than one title. Everyone is expected to work at the best of their capacity, which means one book per creative art team. Of course, the writers write more than one book. We're able to put our best work in until we're happy with it, because we're told to do one page a day—as opposed to having to do two or three pages a day to make a living. Another thing unique to



CROSSGEN is when the book is ready, the entire team can look at a color printout to see if any changes need to be made, so that the entire creative team can sign off on it before it's finally printed. I've had books in the past where I didn't see the final version until it was printed.

RM: Sort of like the equivalent of movie directors having the final decision, we are the one who see it last and we decide what needs to be changed and what needs to be corrected; sometimes corrections are required, and sometimes there are just some subtle artistic tweaks that we would like to make at that point. We are the ones who see the book at its final stage before it's off to the printers.

BK: We are also aware of the schedule, that sometimes we have to make that call to let it go as is.

RM: Exactly.

SC: *One thing I've noticed about CROSSGEN—and I've seen people here from the very beginning—is the incredible synergy between the teams; there is some sort of gathering of focus in making one book. So it's easy to pass off; the inker knows what the direction is, the colorist, artist, writer—everybody is on the same page. Everybody's juices are just flowing; creating one product that is so in-line.*

GP: Rick is as fully aware of the plot of the story as is Larry, as opposed to the old days when the writer and the pencilers were the only one to see the story; the inkers were there to ink the book with no real understanding of the story, because they weren't privy to it. In fact it's a product where any one of the team can come to Barbara and say, "Why don't we try this?" Everyone is involved.

SC: *It's a team effort.*

BK: Not only that, there's a fifth artist on each team who doesn't always get talked about; who knows, maybe we will add them to the credits in the future. The lettering is taking on a storytelling aspect of its own. With Dave, Troy and Oscar on staff here, we can go over the pages and help choose a font. I can walk in and say, "I need this kind of font for this

character to get this kind of impression... to look kind of like this," and Dave would show me some samples and ask me if this fit, and I would say that it's too formal. Lettering becomes part of the character of the speaker and part of the art of the book, and they are exploring that as much as possible.

SC: *Who does the actual lettering of the books, is it the colorist?*

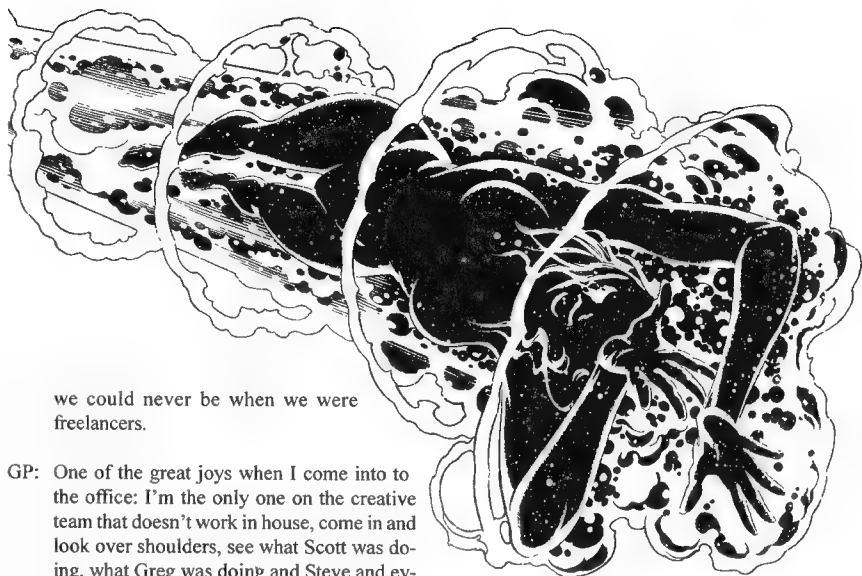
BK: It's the letterer.

GP: It's a whole different department, we have three people that letter the CROSSGEN books.

BK: What they get from me is a photocopy of the page of art that has been drawn over with sharpie marker to indicate who is speaking. I asked Dave Lamphear why they retype each page of script—as opposed to importing the script—and he said they do that for quality control. He found in the past with computer lettering that sometimes it will import and entire line along with columns, including stage directing material, and lay it out nicely, but because they are working with words as art form, lose the sense of logic to what is being said in it. If they have to type it in, they retain that logic of the information going into the word balloon... Making sure all the words are there and what the words mean so they can reinforce the story. There are subtle little things that letters can do—the shape and size of the tail and balloons, the angle of the lettering—to help reinforce the character in voice, and if they are clued in to the plot and story and know what's going on they help add to the finish product.

SC: *The thing I like most about CROSSGEN is the cohesiveness. Like we said in the past, everyone has a voice. Four heads are better than one; you never know what you are going to come up with, which is great.*

RM: We are kind of like teams in a larger team. In our individual team we have our goal to make our book the best book out there basically. As a company team we want the company a cross the board to be successful so we all band together on that regard, because if the company is a success we all are a success the way



we could never be when we were freelancers.

GP: One of the great joys when I come into to the office: I'm the only one on the creative team that doesn't work in house, come in and look over shoulders, see what Scott was doing, what Greg was doing and Steve and everyone else. One of the things I find as an artist after twenty-eight years is an artist's ego is easily intimidated, so when I see somebody doing their best work at CROSSGEN, there is no resting on laurels in this company. You want everyone to be as proud of you as you are of them. When they are doing their best work, well when they are talking about me, I want them to say, and "George is doing his best work." I really get intimidated or inspired when seeing artist's work printed, but now I'm getting the chance to see it before its printed and sometimes just sitting down and talking with the artist of the other books, understanding what they are thinking, banging back and forth basic ideas of storytelling, panel construction and stuff like that. One of the thing that I never really got working freelance for so many years was a feeling of community, because I worked alone. I still work alone, but by coming in to to the office on a regular basis, this is a family unit, this is my family here and we are all involved in a community of families here. We are just one big trailer park. This is definitely unique to the industry and again I've been working in this industry close to thirty years and this has been the most unique working situation that I have ever had.

BK: It is expensive though, and frankly the way we do comics does not make economic sense in the short term to operate this way, it makes sense if you are thinking ten or twenty years down the road where you have a bunch of people invested. One of the company's highest expenses is employee turn over and training time on new employees and all that. So if you have happy employees who stay a long time you are better off down the road even though those individuals my cost you a little more. For bigger companies the freelance makes sense in terms of keeping their costs down because they have a big corporate level they have to answer to. Look at two comics; one done by freelancers and one done in-house, and on their level they fail to see any difference on the final product so it doesn't make any economic sense to them to pay the extra to have the books produced in-house. They want to keep the cost to a minimum... is what the freelance system essentially does. You have people in the front line that seem to take a lot of flack for their system, but at the same time the editors there that try to move Heaven and Earth try to get good situation for good people to get good books put together and they are stuck in a nearly impossible situation of trying to please two sides... but can't be pleased, but except by one going

TL: *The most unique that I have ever seen*

higher or lower on the other end. It is amazing that they do manage to put out really wonderful books. We have the advantage to have one guy at the top where the buck stops there so he understands what it is going to cost him to make the aesthetic decisions that he loves, but is willing to do it, willing to invest in for a big long haul in the people who do the work now. Which the only thing that makes this thing work is Mark Alessi.

TL: *The cost of big business.*

SC: *The CROSSGEN share now has a little over 5% of the entire comic industry, and it's getting bigger all the time.*

TL: *How long has SOLUS been in development and was George the original artist in mind for the series?*

BK: Yes, the book was designed around George. The book was designed to be a replacement for George's work on CHRONICLES when George announced that he wanted to come back and do a monthly book. We started with a premise that it had to travel all a cross the CROSSGEN Universe because we know George has a short attention problem, ha, ha. So if he was going to offer himself for a monthly, we really wanted to exploit his talents. So starting from there—by the way it has been in development since June of 2002—it had been in small development before that. So the real develop work started in June after the Philadelphia show.

GP: After the Philly show is when I said I wanted to do a monthly book.

BK: After the Chicago convention when things got started, everything seems to relate to conventions.

TL: *George, how much creative input do you have as far as the story and the plot goes?*

GP: Well quite truthfully, in case of the plot and story I don't have as much input. There's enough voices speaking in the room and the fact that I am not in the offices everyday... I tend to leave that for Mark, Barbara, Gina and Chuck Dixon in the story editing process



LARRY

and signing off on the story. My job is to take Barbara's script and pace it. Barbara knows my work well enough to know not to worry about the action. I'll take it from A to Z and all other letters in between. Even if she makes suggestions, but I think another way would make it better, because my job is to pace it, but never go away from the spirit or any specific important plot points that Barbara has put in there. But sometimes I'll find different routes to get there and like I've done today—I sit down with Barbara, anything that might deviated from the letter of

her plot I tell her what I've done and she makes notes and we work from there. I've done that most of my career. One of the big prides that I have is most writers will trust me. I don't have a large ego where I have to have my stamped envelope; with exception for the fact I want it to do a service to the writer to make their vision a reality... and sometimes show something that they hadn't seen, doing it without undermining what they had originally planned.

TL: *I've always seen that the sense of respect for all the writers that you have worked with over the years.*

GP: I mean having written myself, no one likes to see their work changed haphazardly; disrespected. I wouldn't disrespect Barbara, just like Rick wouldn't disrespect my pencils. Rick and I have come to an agreement on how much I need to provide for him, so he has enough to ink but also leaving him enough room to where he can put his own mark on it and his mark is incredible. He has done stuff that I absolutely love. In one issue, Rick has proven to be one of my best inkers ever. And the same thing with Larry, everyone has this freedom, Larry is not going to change the mood of the scene that calls for everything bright and sunny. He's not going to turn around and say "I'm going to make it night because I want to," unless he has a reason for it. We have agreed and disagreed, he had something on some stuff that I didn't count on. In one case I disagreed and we worked it out and on another case I didn't think of that but his was better, perfect. That's great.

TL: *I'm really excited about seeing Larry's work.*

(Now that I've seen it, Larry's doing a great job.)

RM: George has a certain stamp on his work. People tend to overlook his pacing and his storytelling ability. It's more of a subtle thing, something almost subliminal in a way—maybe stretch out certain dramatic moments, compacted a certain way, sometimes taking two things a making them one, sometimes taking two pages and making them four. We expanded SOLUS number one from 32 pages to 34 pages because it was felt the story was needed and that's what I think George brings... more than just the basic craft of penciling... bring more to the actual storytelling.

TL: *Rick, is there a lot more pressure inking George's work as opposed to inking a newcomer or someone not of George stature?*

RM: I wouldn't call it pressure so much is as responsibility. We have so much history in the business, I think that I have seen so much of George's work throughout my entire career. I think there is a sense of being true to what George is establishing. At the same time the inker brings another element to it, other than just going over the lines. Line weights, keeping track of light sources, little things subtly reinforcing things without being "in your face." It is not so much pressure, I just feel responsible. More than anything else, I want to be true to George and I want to be true to the book and the entire team involved.

BK: Someone like George who has been inked so extensively by so many good people... If you are next in line, there are so many examples of so many people that inked him well, as a opposed to being a goldmine of an inker, is to be the first guy to come along with a really good penciler who has never been inked well, so you are the first to draw out the first true essence of that art... so you are going to look like a superstar. Rick is under incredible peer pressure to be better than the other guys that have inked George. He's done an incredible job.

GP: In fact some of the best inking that I have ever had has been by Mike Perkins and Rick here. I have been very fortunate that the stuff that I've done—without fail the CROSSGEN

work—is some of the best work that I have had done, even when I've been inked by someone that has inked me before: Pablo Marcos on CHRONICLES. Also Rick was there to help Pablo because inking styles have changed and you get a better inking job out of it. I have been very fortunate here. I'm the inker on the JLA/AVENGERS. I'm getting very tired. So I'm very happy to have Rick inking me on SOLUS.

Mark informed me that SOLUS issue one was the 300th on time book. That is a wonderful accomplishment. What's really fun about working with Barbara on SOLUS: she is coming up with some totally different visuals. Some are established worlds which the references are right there. Barbara sent me an e-mail for reference for the cover of issue number four. Twenty-five links just for reference for the cover. Is this woman mad? Twenty-five reference for the cover! I was getting the references before I even know what the cover was even about, but it was a very easy design once I knew exactly what Barbara was going for. Because of the nature of the book and the nature of the industry sometimes of course you don't see a plot until you are ready for it, but the covers have to be done months ahead. It's time to encapsulate and create a world on a cover you haven't yet got your mind wrapped around because you have not done any type of design work on that new world.

TL: *How far is SOLUS plotted out for?*

BK: It's blocked out in rough form for 36 issues and it's blocked out in more specific form in six issues but then you hit certain issues like issue four that contains continuity information but no information about the story that will be in the issue. What George got for instance: the cover was a couple of paragraphs of descriptions of what the story would be about, but I don't tell him what's going to be on the cover, I tell him what's going on in the issue.

GP: In this instance we go to a new world. Well great, what kind of new world are we in? Ha, ha! Well then I get a little more information, because without more information I could draw any old world.

BK: There was information about the world in the third paragraph.

GP: In the third paragraph, yes, ha, ha.

LM: One of the things about working with George, I really don't have try to work to make George's art look good, it already does. I just have to complement it. So that was some of the problem I had before. When you work with bad art, you have to try to make it look good.. and when you make it look good you don't get the credit.

GP: I remember it from the old Malibu days, you were so blinded by the color you didn't realize they were doing it deliberately so you could see the drawing was actually on the weak side.

TL: *The following are a few nuts and bolts questions. What goes into making an issue of SOLUS or any comic for that matter? Barbara what are the steps you take before George starts penciling?*

BK: We start with continuity conference to figure out what needs to happen to further the story in the big CROSSGEN Universe.

TL: *Who's involved with that?*

BK: Me, Mark Alessi, Gina Villa and Chuck Dixon. Then we break it down to specific issue beats. To what's roughly going on, that's one paragraph what will happen in that issue. For instance for the case of issue four, nothing is decided beyond certain continuity beat. On others we just start talking, wouldn't it be cool to do this, wouldn't it be cool to do that, and pretty soon we have built the whole issue. Then I go back and do a specific outline. That outline goes out to these guys, so feedback is filtered back. Then I do specific page plot where I try to channel my inner George. Stick in six times as much plot information that you could do for any other human being and knowing he will double that amount. What George tends to get from me in my plots are what the characters are thinking and

what they intend to do, where they want to be and what they want to do, and not ever mentioning what should be drawn in the panels. So it becomes George's job to try and translate my esoteric into drawings.

GP: It's kind of the equivalent of doing a stage play with minimal stage direction. You basically have to design the stage, to figure it out. "Ok, this is what they are saying, where are they?" Then work from there.

BK: So the stories are there, the characters are there.

GP: Like I said before, that's where I come in. She gives me a good story with certain visuals and then my job is to make it into a comic book story that requires as much dialog as she has put into the script. Hopefully a little less because I have started a lot of characterizations and body language that she doesn't have to do anything descriptive that needs to establish atmosphere. My job is to produce a silent movie that requires a minimum amount of dialog needed to be able to understand the story. That way we don't get in each other's way.

BK: For instance if I was working with a brand new writer or a brand new artist, I might say "establishing shot of Liddy, medium shot on a hill, horizontal panel starting cross the top of the page." You need to establish the angle of the hill, the ground below, what she is wearing, etcetera. "Panel two: close up on the foot taking a step. Panel three: close up on the character's face."

TL: *Little step format.*

BK: Exactly. With George, "Get the character up the hill." George already knows how to get the character up the hill, he knows how to get the storytelling across.

TL: *It's like riding a bike.*

GP: It's also one of the things from my experience from doing team books for so many years, that many times the writer will center on the character that is most important

RI



in that action. I will remember that there are other characters around the scene. Should be doing something that she doesn't require her to write the character doing anything?... but to remember that everyone—as they say in drama—should be in scene. So everyone is constantly involved in the story even if they are not the pivotal people of that action.

BK: One thing that drives me crazy in comics: you have a group book and you have indicated something for this one character and the rest of the characters are standing around like card board cut outs, because they haven't been told to do anything specific or say anything specific. They don't have any character, they are just drawn there.

GP: Barbara and I share a past history in drama. We have done stage work. We have that same type of actor instincts that we like to incorporate into our writing and drawing of comic books. Mine is the character body language and hers is the love of dialogue.

BK: One of the things that George does absolutely naturally: there is a phenomenon in stage called "giving stage." If you have five characters on stage and they are focused on one, they are reinforcing to the audience so no matter which person the audience looks at, that person's eyes are sending the audience to the person that is the focal point. George does that naturally in the story. That is another way to boost the drama of the scene or just the reality of the scene or control the focus point of the scene. So many don't take advantage of the simplest trick in America. Understand the three quarter face, how two people can appear to be looking at the audience while they speak to each other, because they are both on a vector, looking out at the audience as well at each other. The focal points meet but they are not straight onto each other giving you profiles. You can see their face and see their expression.

GP: In movies it's called "the cheat." They are not exactly looking at each other but because of the angle they are addressing the screen, but you can tell they are still fo-

cused on the person they are talking to.

TL: *Rick, what is your process?*

RM: With George it is all there. I'm a firm believer that everyone involved in the production of a comic is a storyteller in a sense. The inker can do things that distract or draws attention away from what the focus of the scene is supposed to be, and likewise the colorist as well. The nuts and bolts of it: I do about eighty to ninety percent brushwork. I use pens too. It all boils down to what feels right. I have more range with a brush. I can do more subtle things. With a brush you can go from any range of thickness in a single stroke as opposed with a pen—you may have to go over it a little bit, unless you got a more flexible pen—but even with that the brush still has a wider range of thickness and it's more expressive.

GP: The ink glides as opposed to drags.

RM: Exactly, bottom line: the best inkers ever are inkers that can draw as well. Knowing that you can't go off on a tangent and try to be flashy in a certain way because it's going to take too much away of what the story is supposed to be. That to me has been the bottom line to me as being an inker or colorist, in every aspect of this business.

BK: You can tell when the inker is paying attention to the story. The actual weight of each line will be heavier in a more dramatic heavy scene and in a comedic it will be more lighter and all that.

RM: You play off of certain things. It's not the case of going perfectly over every single line there. It has more to do with what that line represents. "What was George's intent with that line?" He doesn't necessarily want me to go over each line perfectly, line weight and everything. I've got some freedom to be expressive within the context of that scene, within the context of what the story is supposed to be.

GP: What Rick said about not following the lines: I remember working with Jerry Ordway on CRISIS and much earlier when Joe Sinnott was doing wonders to make

me look good on THE FANTASTIC FOUR. One of the greatest achievements by an inker—particularly someone who takes the responsibility to enhance and to add their own flare to the finished page. If I can look at the page and not realize that I did not draw, that the shadow that he may have added was not in the original pencils, so it was perfectly logical... so of course that's probably the way I drew it. No, that's way Rick reinterpreted correctly or added that extra flourish. So he made it better, but he served to make it one united piece of artwork, as opposed to inks becoming Rick.

BK: I've seen inkers do that, layering themselves over pencils without interpreting.

RM: That is one of the keys, the best teamwork is where you can't tell where the penciler left off and the inker begins. Basically two people become one, one single artist.

GP: When I was working on THE AVENGERS—and I'm sure it's going to happen with SOLUS—one of the greatest things as an artist is when people compliment the story without singling out the art. That is because you have done your job. The entire book is what they are happy with. It's not that they are not happy with the artwork. That's not why they are not commenting on it. It's the entire story package; the words and the visuals, the concept and the finish lines. If they loved the book, they loved everything about it. If they didn't like the art, they would tell you about it. If they didn't like the colors, they would tell you. If they didn't like the lettering, they would tell you. So the fact that they like the book... you have done your job. We have all merged into a team that has producing good reading matter.

TL: Larry, do you [use] mock color guide or do you go right to the computer?

LM: I'll get the pages and look them over, then I will talk to them to see what they had in mind and I'll put my input. They will tell me they want this scene to create this mood and I will tell them how I interpret the mood with color. I like to direct the eyes of the reader to go from the top of the page

to the bottom of the page, making sure I'm focusing on what is most important on the page... making sure that particular part is rendered so that your eyes are focused on that, and the rest is background.

GP: One of the great gifts that a colorist like Larry has is knowing that he has a million colors. "Let me use a few that works in a scene," not saying "I've got a million colors, I'm going to use a million colors," and understanding white is a color.

BK: Tom Ziuko to my knowledge, would actually use white as an extra color, everyone else would fill the whole page.

GP: And yes, that is nice.

TL: I especially like the TEEN TITANS cover where the background is all white.

GP: The easiest cover to autograph, where I have plenty of room.

TL: It looks so bold.

GP: Everything that you do in single storytelling, in the case of covers, it's going for impact.

TL: It jumps out at you. Do you all work differently with different creators?

GP: In my case, in my trust of Rick and what I've seen of Rick, I do somewhere between the type of breakdowns I did on THE AVENGERS to the full pencils that I would do on books I would be inking myself. I find that middle ground, everything is semitight, but rough enough that Rick can smooth out the edges and add any extra touches that he feels needed. In the case of working with inkers on the CROSSGEN CHRONICLES, being that I'm working with people that I haven't worked with before or not in a long time, my pencils are so tight that I drew even the vein on the leaves in the pencil stage. The inkers did a great job but I didn't give them that much room for expressing their own identity. But in a book like CHRONICLES, it kept changing world to world—it wasn't as important to me at the time, but with SOLUS,

this is a long-term book. I want everyone to feel like we are all contributing. If I give a book that Rick isn't allowed to anything Rickish, I couldn't blame him to get a little bored. Anyone can trace a line... not anyone. Good person can trace a line well.

RM: I think in terms of teams: inkers, colorists and pencilers adapt to whatever the material is. The inker adapts hopefully to the penciler and the colorist likewise. I think that to me has been part of the fun. Here's a real quick story: when I was doing background inks, I was doing background inks for people like Joe Sinnott on THE DEFENDERS and the same time I was doing background inks on Steve Mitchell's IRON MAN and Al Milgrom on PETER PARKER. Part of the fun doing that for me was trying to make it look like if Joe Sinnott inked it. I would put on different hats or different material to fit the style of who I was inking and that was part of the fun of it. The same holds true with working with different pencilers—you don't want to come up with something that you come up with that you want to laminate on everyone. The penciler is what you feed off. What they have set up and go with their vision. So hopefully an inker follow through on their intents as well.

GP: That's interesting, I remember that one of the things that Dick Giordano or Joe Rubinstein or people that had background inkers working with them: Often times [that] was distracting when you realize that this background was inked by someone else and this background is inked by someone else as opposed—as I think Rick had perfectly said it—know you are trying to make it a core finished product, but suddenly

you're distracted by the background, but you should be. In fact when Rick first inked me, he helped Mike Perkins and he helped Dennis Jansen as well, so he can't abruptly become a different person, so he tried to keep the flow of the artwork as best he could... not being Dennis and not being Mike. Rick did a marvelous job with that, particularly with working with the Mike Perkins job. I didn't know where Rick started and Mike ended. I think it all goes back about what Rick said that we are there to tell the story, we all get are fame, our name is on the cover. Beyond that the person to be the focus should be the reader. One of the great things about CROSSGEN was being wooed by Mark Alessi. As much as he wanted to have my reputation, my talent and my marketability. One thing that appealed to him is my relationship with the fans. The fact that we know how this industry has been floundering and that the fan comes first. As much as we loving doing this we have to come up with something that someone wants to read. If we are excited, and we go out to conventions and show how much fun we're having doing comics, that can be contagious. "Hey this is fun!" If we don't love what we do, why would we expect anybody else to love what we do?

TL: I want to thank everyone for taking time out for PACESETTER and its readers. I think SOLUS is going to be a sure-fire hit, especially with all the great talent involved in this book.

GP, BK, RM and LM: Thank you.



CROSSGEN CHECKLIST

(CP=Cover Pencils • IP = Interior Pencils • IA = Interior Artist)

COMICS

- CrossGen Chronicles #2 (CP, IP)
- CrossGen Chronicles #3 (CP, IP)
- CrossGen Chronicles #4 (CP, IP)
- CrossGen Chronicles #5 (CP, IP)
- CrossGen Illustrated #1 (rep; CP)
- Meridian: Going to Ground TP #2 (rep; IP)
- Mystic: Demon Queen TP #2 (rep; IP)
- Solus #1 (CP, IP)
- Solus #2 (CP, IP)
- Solus #3 (CP, IP)
- Retailers preview (black and white advance preview of issue one of Solus)

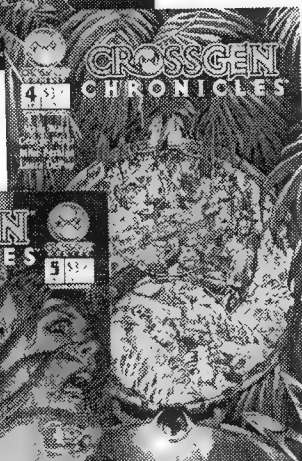
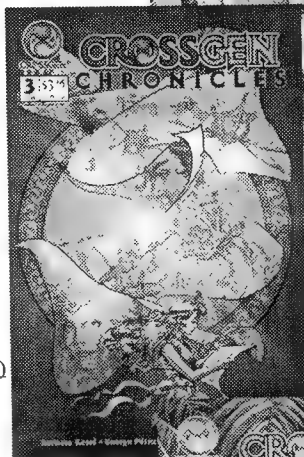
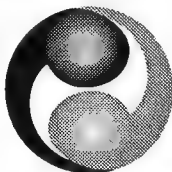
APPAREL

CrossGen 2002 Anniversary Tour T-Shirt (White)

PRINTS AND POSTERS

CUSTOM PRINTS AVAILABLE IN 20x30 AND 12x18 AND LOTS OF OTHER OPTIONS, AUTOGRAPHED, MATTING, ETC...

- The City of Meridain
- Crossgen Chronicles #2 cover
- Crossgen Chronicles #3 cover
- The Heroines of Crossgen
- Edwin Attacks
- A Battle at sea
- Edwin of the Herons
- Cast out!
- Andra the Barbarian
- Solus #2 cover
- Laser Cell Matted cover of Solus #1
 - #signed edition
 - #unsigned edition



GEORGE PÉREZ NEWSLETTER

- [George Pérez Newsletter #1](#) (P, REPRINT)

PÉREZ ARCHIVES

- [Pérez Archives #1 \(deluxe\)](#) (CA, IA, CHECKLIST)
- [Pérez Archives #1 \(regular\)](#) (CA, IA, CHECKLIST)
- [Pérez Archives #1 \(hardcover\)](#) (CA, IA, CHECKLIST)

PREVIEWS

- [PrevIEWS Consumer Order Form \(Jan 03\)](#) (CA)

WIZARD MAGAZINE

- [Wizard's Postermania 2001](#) (rep, IP)
- [Wizard's Postermania! 2002](#) (rep; IP)
- [Wizard's Postermania! 2003](#) (rep; IP)
- [Wizard: The Comics Magazine #136](#) (int; news)
- [Wizard: The Comics Magazine #139](#) (news, rep)

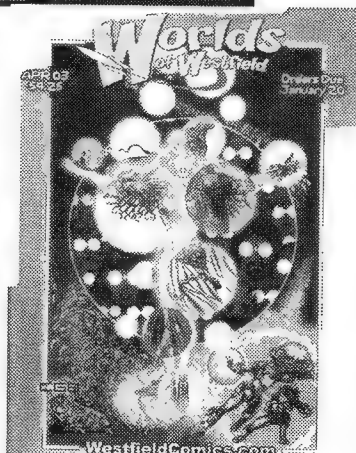
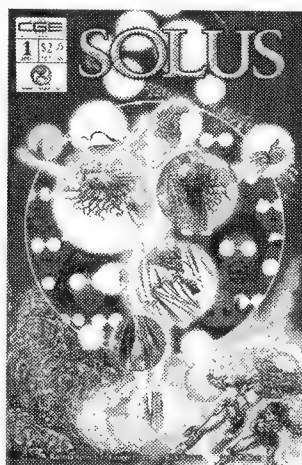
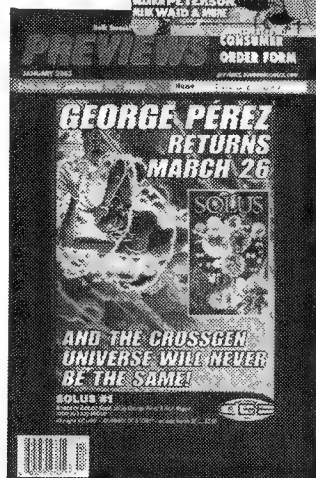
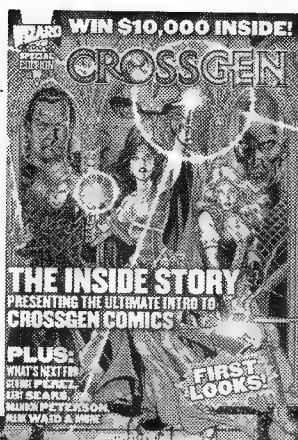
[World of Westfield Apr Catalogue](#) (Solus #1 cover)

CONVENTION PROGRAMS

[MEGACON 2001](#) (REPRINT, BIO)

[MEGACON 2003](#) (REPRINT, BIO,

& BACK COVER AD)



QUESTION OF THE ISSUE: What Comic Would You Love to See George Draw and Why?

The comic I would most love to see George draw is **THE LEGION OF SUPERHEROES** the classic 80's era in which the team had 25 members. It was one of the best team books out there that he has barely touched other than some covers and minor character appearances. The primary reason being—yes it is another team book but also most importantly a team book in which George can do a lot of characters and play with their costumes. I remember from **CRISIS** he did a bit of work showing the characters and they looked great. He was also involved in designing their costumes for their regular series (art can be found in one of the little Legion DC Digests). Phantom Girl's costume was great. I think that he has a vivid imagination and I think that he would be able to change all their costumes and still make the team shine. He has amazing ideas when it comes to changing a characters costume, rather it be a subtle change or a big one, and still remaining true to that characters roots. That is what George is all about. Imagine, it's like having 25 new Superheroes!!

-Richard G



I would really like to see George draw **The Legion**, even if it was for just a single issue. Back when George drew **CRISIS**, I got a chance to see his take on **THE LEGION**, and loved it. His rendition of **THE LEGION** left me with a craving, wanting to see more of his interpretation of those characters.

Now that many years has past, and having just purchased the TPB of **CRISIS**, I got that old craving back. Even though **THE LEGION** is different now, I would still like to see George take a shot at them!

-Mark Tillson

Well over the years George has blessed us with his interpretations of almost all the major characters from Marvel and DC and beyond but there is one corner of the DC universe he left without making a mark. I would love to see George draw the **LEGION OF SUPERHEROES**! In old interviews I have read it seems like he was possibly going to draw the book during the late '70s or early '80s and it would be a blast to see an elseworlds Legion project by George or possibly something in current continuity.

-Kudjo Bosu

The project I would love to see George Pérez do is an adaptation of Al Capp's **Li'l ABNER**! Some years ago, George actually played Abner in a community theater production, and he provided original drawings of the characters for the theater program. The work was a direct imitation of Capp, yet there were still elements in it that were unmistakably Pérez. His art was included in an interview he did back in the 80s, I believe for **AMAZING HEROES**.

I'm not aware of George ever really doing any professional work in the "bigfoot" style, but if the rights to **Li'l Abner** could ever be obtained from Capp's estate, I think George would have a lot of fun with it.

-Gene Popa

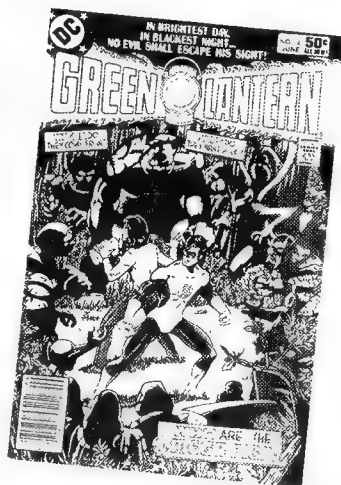
Li'l ABNER



GIVE MR. GENTLEMAN GEORGE PÉREZ A POWER RING.

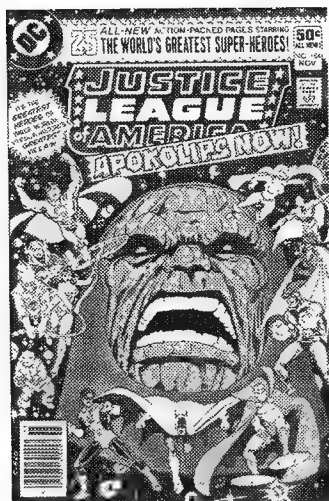
I wanted to see Mr. Pérez take on a Hal Jordan/Green Lantern series. When I saw his covers to GL #132, 141-144 and the unused cover in GL #145 I thought he would have been perfect for the title. I always loved his drawings of Hal Jordan when he was the penciller of **JUSTICE LEAGUE OF AMERICA**. I was disappointed when Crisis came out and Hal Jordan was the only major character not to appear in the series. It might not be a monthly GL series but I am really excited about **JLA/AVENGERS** and that Mr. Pérez is drawing my favorite ring slinger again. Yeaaaaaaaa!!!!

-Eric Sellers



I think it would be spectacular to see George draw a 48-page **GREEN LANTERN** special. Think about it: here's this character who wields the most powerful weapon in the universe, a ring that makes anything the wearer can think of. The ring is only limited by the force of the wearer's will and the scope of his/her imagination. I would love to see George draw an issue featuring Hal Jordan and all 3600 members of the Green Lantern Corps in an all-out war with an entire galaxy of malevolent alien beings against them. I suppose the next best thing, to me, would only be the upcoming **JLA/AVENGERS**.

-Joe Grunenwald



I would have to go for the squashed JLA/ AVENGERS project from some years back. Naturally I look forward to the upcoming version of the project but for me the teams involved at the time were the true classic line-ups. I heard the new story will be incorporating different eras but in trying to fit every member ever I hope a good plot and story are not lost. I'm sure if anyone can accomplish a heavy line-up with a great story George is the man as seen in CRISIS ON INFINITE EARTHS along with Marv Wolfman. This new project may in fact turn out to be superior but would it be a crime for the legendary first draft to be printed. I heard at one point that Rob Liefeld owned the pages and were that to be true I think publishing them would be far nobler than displaying them at conventions. Rob knows how to give an audience what they want in a comic (although some might disagree with me) so why not do the right thing and sell them back to Marvel or DC with the clause that they be published? That's my 2 cents.

-Dan Sehn

The comic that I would most like George Pérez to draw is TEEN TITANS, because he can bring them back to their former glory. That title has gotten way too complicated and they don't resemble the feel of the TEEN TITANS book that George Pérez made great!

-Carlos Pico

If I had my way, he would do the JSA (DC). I think my reason for this would be the fact that his clear and concise pencils would enhance an already good story just like his work on the AVENGERS. George's style is best suited for a team book and I think the JSA would be a strong candidate for the "Pacesetter" to try.

I would also like to see a return to the FANTASTIC FOUR. Pérez's run in the Bronze Age is what I grew up on and that would be a wonderful place for his talents to be given full reign to bring on the bad guys.

-Jeff Weaver



I would love to see George do 2 types of story: One - a Neil Gaiman SANDMAN story where he gets to use his mythological chops like he did in his WONDER WOMAN run, or Two - a small more "quiet" book where he shows his subtle side, like strangers in paradise or the waiting place, the type of quiet story he showed back in "Who is Donna Troy."

-Jeff Shugawash

George drew the first comic I ever bought, but the first series that I really followed month after month was Marv Wolfman's NOVA. I would love to see George along with creator Marv Wolfman do a Nova series. I believe it would be a sure fire hit! George and Marv worked so well together on the NEW TEEN TITANS and I think George's dramatic style would really bring Nova to life like no other artist has. We have seen George draw Nova on a few very limited occasions, even a full story in the back of an issue of What If? What a series that would be.

-Tony Lorenz



The book that I would love to see George draw would be ASTRO CITY. Kurt is one of my favorite writers and George is my favorite artist and they have worked together before. George and Kurt together on ASTRO CITY would make the magazine a sure fire hit.

-Gary Smith

Did you know...

George was inked by Pablo Marcos on CROSSGEN CHRONICLES #5; Pablo was known for inking George's AVENGERS pages for Marvel in the 1970s.





T h a m C W

MALAYSIA

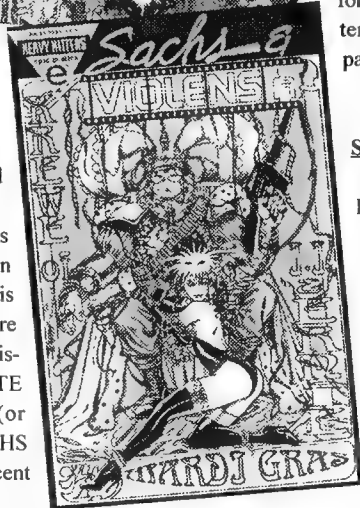
GEORGE PÉREZ: THE PICTURE THAT IS WORTH A THOUSAND WORDS

George Pérez in the comics industry: he might not be as successful as Kirby or Lee – yet – but he sure has a huge fan base. Why is that?

People say that a picture is worth a thousand words. Pérez has proven that statement countless times over and might have well surpassed it. Few in the comics industry, if any, rival the detail Pérez puts in his art.

Art in a comic is what brings the story to life. While nothing can replace the reader's imagination, a good artist is able of capturing the situation and portraying it to the best effect. The art complements the story and sometimes enhances it.

Pérez has done numerous titles. Over a span of more than 20 years, fans can see that his art has become better and more detailed than ever. From the historic CRISIS ON INFINITE EARTHS to the obscure (or maybe less mainstream) SACHS & VIOLENS and to the recent



run on AVENGERS and CROSS GEN CHRONICLES, Pérez has, like a good wine, gone from good to better with time.

Pérez enjoys illustrating groups of characters. This includes his early stint as AVENGERS artist before moving on to the NEW TEEN TITANS and some others such as ULTRAFORCE and I-BOTS before returning to AVENGERS. He is famous for drawing as many characters as possible on to two pages.

Comments on Selected Titles

HULK: FUTURE IMPERFECT

This was the first title I picked up drawn by Pérez. The incredible amount of art detail in the series caused me to pick up more titles in the years to come. This miniseries consisted of lots of rubble-filled panels as

both Hulks attempted to smash each other and everything in between. Each rock looked different from the next. There was a lot of care put into the rendering of the Hulks as well. Readers were able to see each Hulk's different facial expressions and feel what they were feeling – from the present day Hulk's horror at the devastation to the methodical and grim manner of the future Hulk as he controlled his domain with an iron fist.

SACHS & VIOLENS

Whenever Pérez draws a panel filled with many characters, I like to look at what all of those characters are doing. Case in point: the Mardi Gras two-page spread in *SACHS & VIOLENS*. While some artists only fill up a crowd with props – characters that do nothing but stand straight – Pérez goes one step further and gives each and every one in the crowd an action. The result is the two-page Mardi Gras spread, which gives a sense of loudness and noise, being busy to the point of hyperactivity.

CRIMSON PLAGUE

In the *CRIMSON PLAGUE* miniseries, Pérez had a revolutionary idea: real people were used as models for most of his main characters. As such, *CRIMSON PLAGUE* characters came with a high degree of lifelikeness as well as a unique personality attached to them. Unfortunately, as the elusive Red Lady, readers will

probably never see the end of the series. Plagued with misfortunes and high hurdles, the series never got past the second issue, although Pérez had laid the plans for the whole series.

The Future

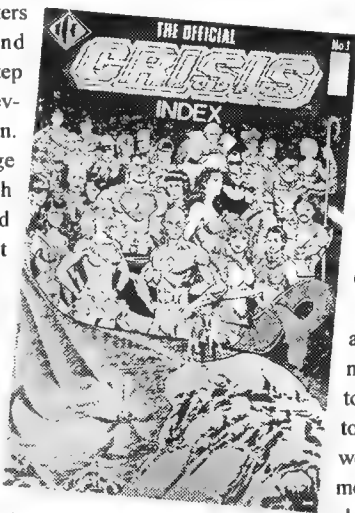
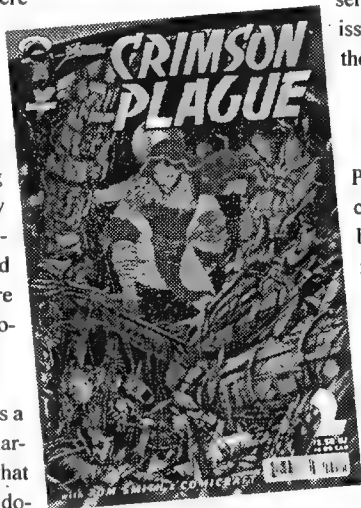
This year (2003), George Pérez fans and all of comicdom will no doubt wait breathlessly for the first book in the much awaited JLA/AVENGERS crossover. This mammoth undertaking, which began over 20 years ago, has finally gotten the blessings of both DC and Marvel – and who more suitable to illustrate the series than the expert in drawing group and team characters, George Pérez.

Currently, Pérez is illustrating for Crossgen Comics. Acknowledging Pérez's skill,

Crossgen had come up with a generous offer tailored to him. Pérez signed on as an artist exclusive to Crossgen on the condition that if the JLA/AVENGERS series was ever green-lighted, he would be allowed to work on it. Crossgen wisely agreed.

George Pérez has come a long way. Currently, he is not in the best of health, due to pressures he has attributed to work. While fans of Pérez would undoubtedly like to see more of his artwork, his schedule and health do not permit it

so. Nevertheless, most fans await anxiously for the next installment of Pérez work on the horizon – however long that might take.



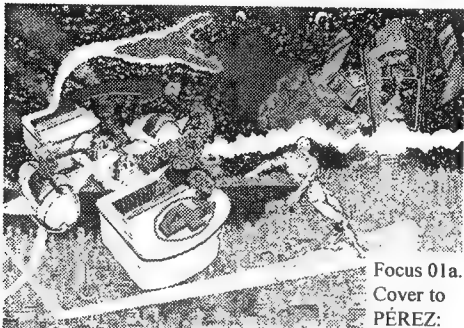
FOCUS ON: THE CITY

by Bobby Nash

Welcome to the inaugural edition of Pacesetter's new *Focus On* column. With each issue we will focus on a subset of George Pérez's work that is interconnected in some way.

For this issue, we're focusing on "The City." No one does the city like George does, so I've selected a small sampling of various major metropolitan cities that have appeared throughout George's career. This is by no means the only work featuring cityscapes, but it is a broad section of work throughout the years.

SUGGESTIONS FOR TOPICS ARE ALWAYS WELCOME



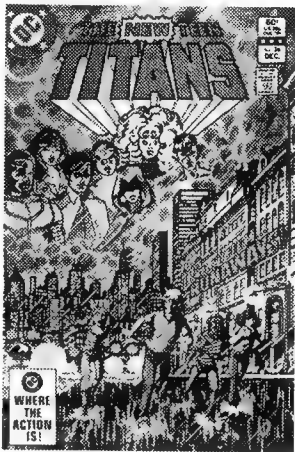
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ACCENT ON
THE FIRST E.



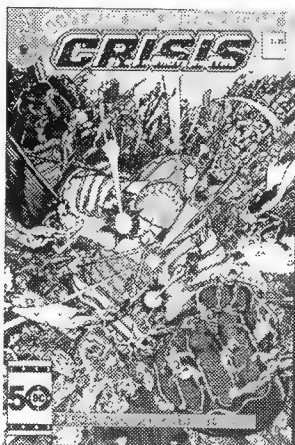
Focus 01b. "The
Thing in Sunday
Punch" ran
through Marvel's
entire line as one
of the Hostess
Fruit Pies ads
popular in the late
'70s/early '80s.



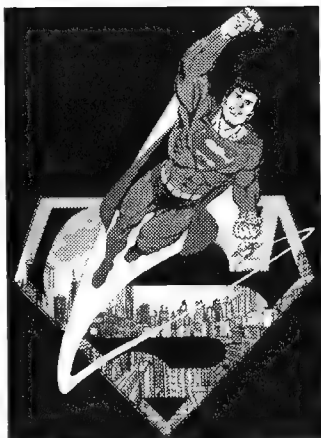
Focus 01c.
Starfire falls
in love for the
first time in
NEW TEEN
TITANS #16.
Inks by
Romeo
Tanghal.



Focus 01d. Runaways. A very popular
issue of NEW TEEN TITANS (#26) by
Wolfman & Pérez.

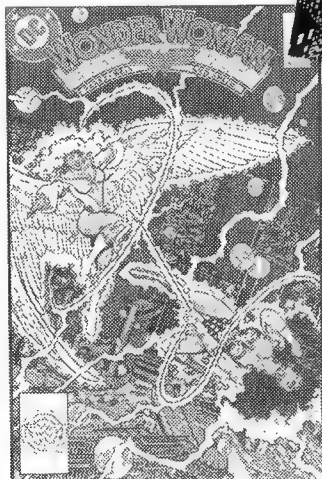


Focus 01e. Trust me, there's an impressive
cityscape in there. The awesome cover to CRISIS
ON INFINITE EARTHS #12, the finale. How
many characters are in there, anyway?

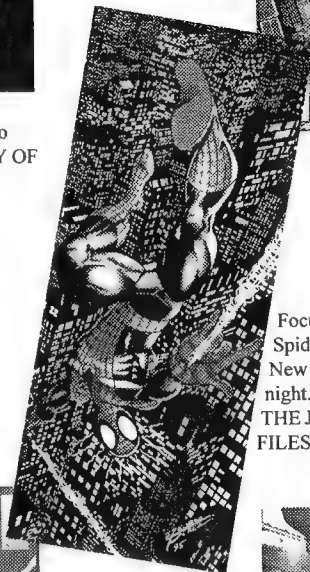


Focus 01f. You can't talk major metropolitan city without a visit to Metropolis. From *THE HISTORY OF THE DC UNIVERSE* #2.

Focus 01g. Wonder Woman and the Silver Swan duke it out over Boston on the cover to *WONDER WOMAN* #16 (vol. 2).



Focus 01h. Free falling and no Tom Petty in sight. George covered *ACTION COMICS WEEKLY* #602.



Focus 01i. Spidey loves New York at night. From *THE JACKAL FILES* one-shot.

Focus 01j The Avengers vs. Starro from the upcoming *JLA/AVENGERS*. This page was part of a teaser run in *Wizard Magazine* #130.



MEDIEVAL MEETS MODERN ERA

by Gary Beck

When CROSSGEN exploded on the scene with its various sigil-bearing heroes, the new concepts thrust on a somewhat stagnated comic industry were revolutionary. One of the titles, SCION, takes us to the planet Avalon. Just as the name implies, the planet presents an interesting blend of feudal Europe with Buck Rodgers technology. This is not a new idea CROSSGEN Chronicles #4, page 7—simply look at the planet Orlando in DC's LEGION OF SUPER-HEROES and you will see the same thing. However, CROSSGEN has given us two kingdoms, the Ravens and the Herons, who have fought for centuries and actually had only a ritual tournament rather than war—that is until Ethan, newly branded with his sigil, scarred the Raven heir, Bron.

CROSSGEN CHRONICLES #2 provides more of an historical look at the current social climate of Avalon. At the outset, Ethan and Skink, Ethan's caregiver since infancy, are camped out chatting. They begin discussing Ethan's ancestor, Edvin, who helped bring about the end of the ages-long conflict with the Ravens. On the ensuing pages, readers are given a ringside seat to a battle at sea that would make the British Fleet envious.

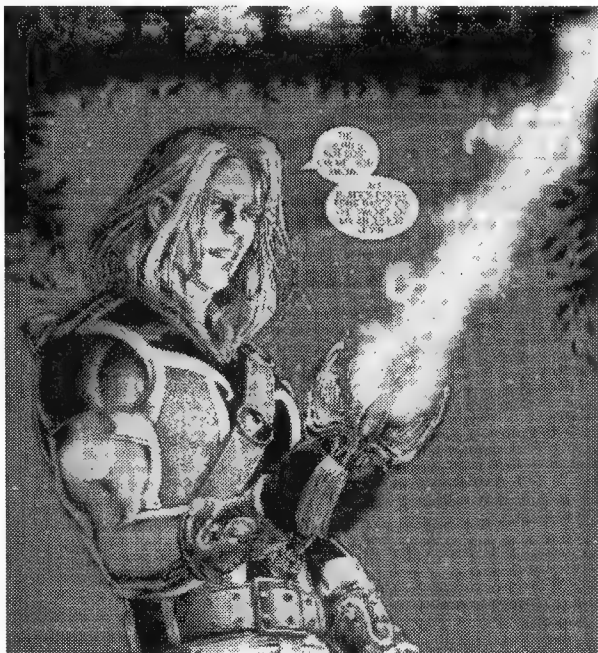
The story itself, in my opinion, would not have much allure were it not for the exceptional artwork in this issue; George Pérez outdid himself. Dennis Jensen and Rick Magyar had their hands full inking his wonderful renditions.

On the first page, you get a taste for how phenomenal this work is. Ethan is standing holding his sword, providing the

reader with every last detail of the couplets and chainmail he is wearing. Each detail down to the belt buckle allows you to sense the texture and craftsmanship of the clothes Ethan is wearing. Getting that visual on page one only opened the door for even more wonderment throughout the comic.

As Edvin's tale begins, the artistic transition from present to past was ingenious. Not to give it away, I can simply tell you that the Heron symbol hypnotically transitions to another time, another place. Due to George's supernatural ability to provide the reader with so much detail, the cacophony present on a colonial warship can be heard.

When the first volley from the Raven ship blasts the main mast of the Edvin's ship, the attack is met. On pages 10-11, George gives a very nice panoramic view of the battle between the two souped-up battleships. However, the truly amazing scenes hit you between the eyes



when you turn the page. As the ships collide, George does not lose one ounce of detail or emotion. The small images of men falling off the ship into the raging waters display blatant terror. The wood grain in the masts and the weave of the ropes are clearly present. The artistry is a masterpiece.

So as not to give away the excitement to be had in reading this story, you can rest assured that never once through the wreckage or

the continued battle on shore is the majesty of George's work lost. There are several scenes, in fact, where his manic attention to detail is complemented with very simple beauty, the likes of which only he can supply.

Each issue of the CROSSGEN CHRONICLES which George drew were magnificent. His ability to incorporate the concepts of the CROSSGEN Universe into such beautiful renderings makes the stories worth reading.



GEORGE PÉREZ GALLERY

You've made it this far... and finally we have one of our most popular features: the Gallery! We love being able to showcase some of George's rare, preliminary, unpublished, and popular pieces of art. Enjoy!



Here we have a sketch of Andra Radiant, from MegaCon

Here are the masterfully detailed pencils for the cover of CROSSGEN Chronicles #2

DEZ

DENNIS
INK SILE
IN overlay
Thank SPZ



Check out the line art for the cover of **CROSSGEN Chronicles #3**, without the benefit of coloring. Look at all the detail!



CROSSGEN/WIZARD
Pérez

Dell

TO: MARK ALESSI
BRANDON PETERSON
BART SEARS
GINA VILLA
etc. ...

GISELLE'S
CAPE +
SKIRT
FORM A
SEA OF
WAVES
MIXED WITH
SOME FOG
F/X

VILLAINS
IMAGES
IN
CATHEDRAL
WINDOWS
SO THAT
THE
WOMEN
REMAIN
CLEAR

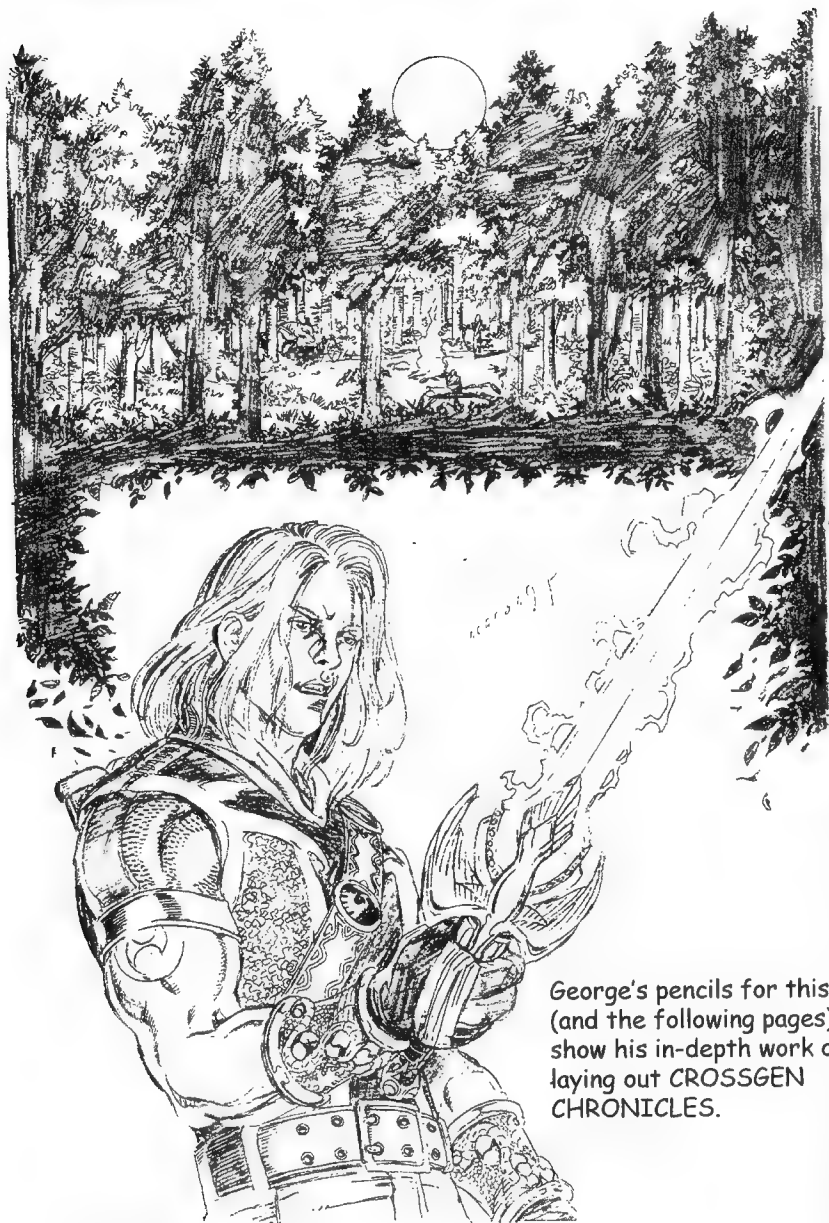
GISELLE'S
SPELLS
CAN
PROVIDE
LIGHTING
OTHERWISE
WOMEN
WALK LIT
BY
WINDOWS

DON'T
WORRY...
IT'LL
LOOK
JAZZIER
WHEN
FINISHED

BEST,
GPZ

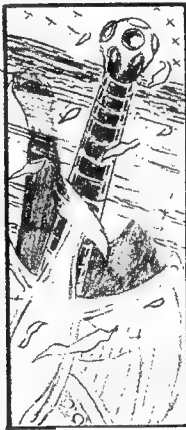
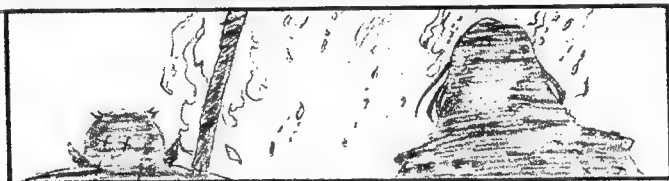


These are the breakdowns of the WIZARD CROSSGEN
Special Edition, complete with notes!



George's pencils for this (and the following pages) show his in-depth work on laying out CROSSGEN CHRONICLES.

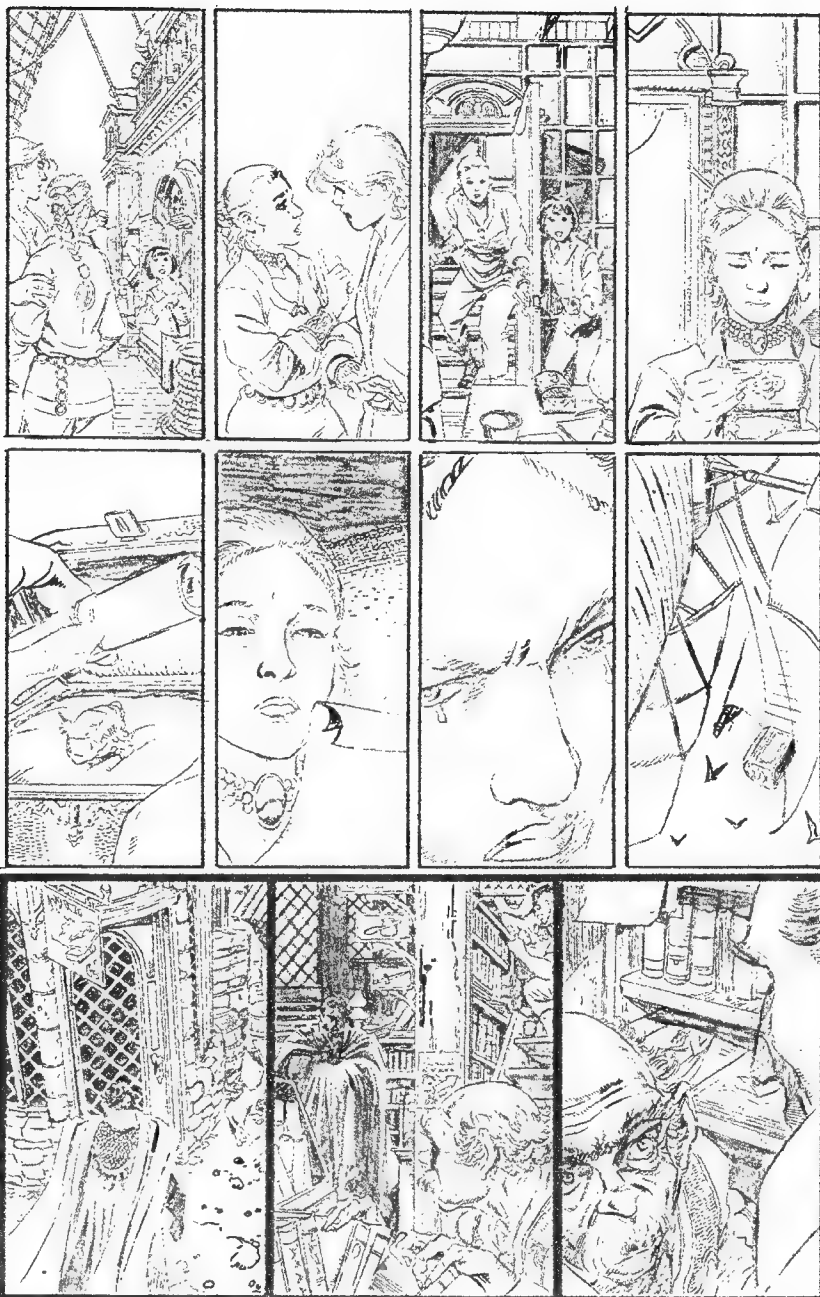


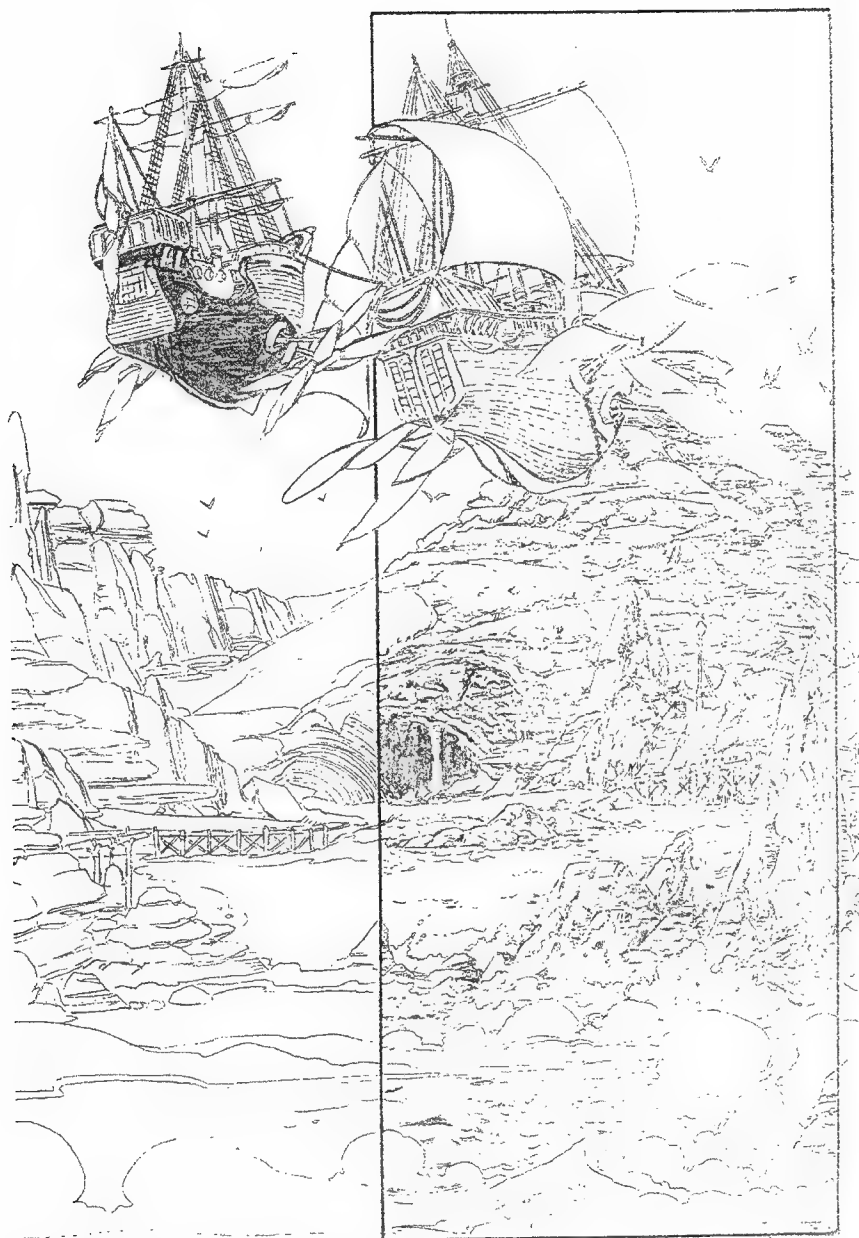






CROSSGEN Chronicles #3, page 4



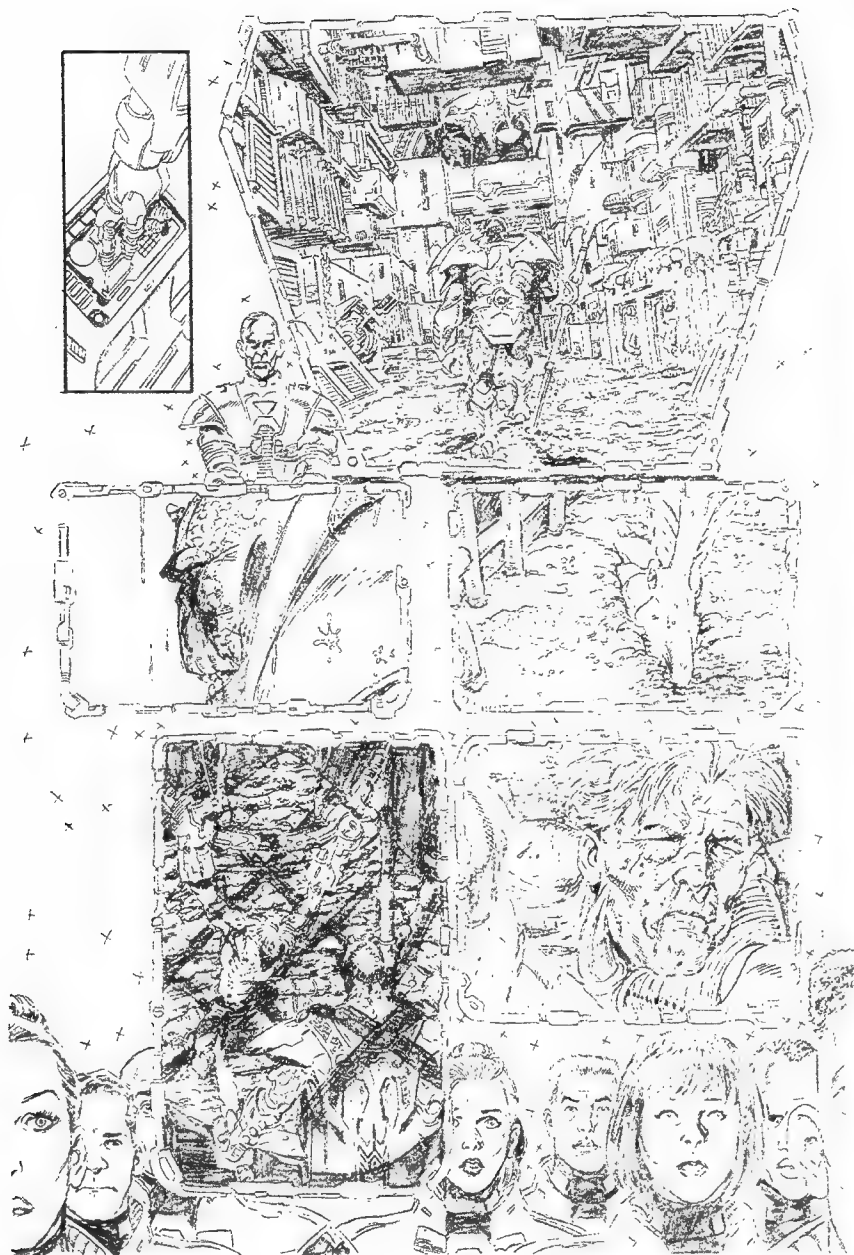


CROSSGEN Chronicles #3, page 21

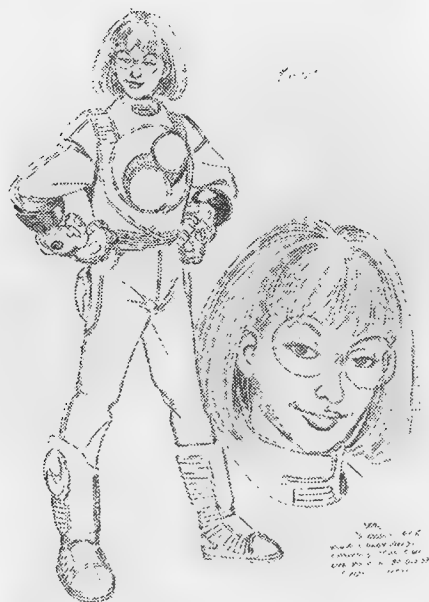
PACESETTER: *The George Pérez Magazine* • 50



CROSSGEN Chronicles #4, page 8

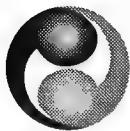






Here we have character sketches for Lindy and Andra from SOLUS.

Note the cool wings on Andra! When are those going to appear?



NEWS and EVENTS



GEORGE PÉREZ DATES OF NOTE & CONVENTION APPEARANCES

06.13-15.03 **Heroes Convention (Charlotte, NC)**
Charlotte Convention Center
Check out the website www.heroesonline.com for the details on this major event!

9.20-21.03 **Baltimore Comic-Con 2003**
Baltimore Convention Center
Phone: 410-526-7410 • www.comicon.com/baltimore

Guests includes: George Pérez, Mark Waid, Geoff Johns, Judd Winick, Frank Cho, Michael Avon Oeming, Neil Vokes, Billy Tucci, Greg Horn, Steve Conley, John Snyder, Marc Hempel, Mark Wheatley, John Gallagher, and more.

UPCOMING PUBLICATIONS OF NOTE:

SOLUS #3

May 2003 • \$2.99 • Crossgen Comics

"Untitled" (23 pages)

writer: Barbara Kesel • pencils: George Pérez • inks: Rick Magyar • colors: Larry Molinar

Long ago-there was a girl who wouldn't let anyone tell her what to do. Now that she has power beyond her wildest imagination, she doesn't know what to do, but when she sees a man with something she considers hers, it'll take more than a tribe of barbarians to keep her from taking it back!

Guest-starring Brath MacGaren, from the pages of BRATH.

Cover loosely based on BRATH PREQUEL (Feb 03) and BRATH #1 (Mar 03).

WIZARD BIG COVERS BOOK #1

May 2003 • Wizard Entertainment • Hardcover Book (194 pages)

Art: Jim Lee, Michael Turner, Glenn Fabry, Adam Hughes, Simon Bisley, George Pérez, Bart Sears, Marc Silvestri, Jeff Scott Campbell, Rob Liefeld, Joe Madureira, Joseph Linsner, Frank Miller, Alex Ross.

This gorgeous 194-page hardcover will collect all of the fantastic covers to the first one hundred issues of Wizard: The Comics Magazine.

Reprinted covers from WIZARD: THE COMICS MAGAZINE #76 AND WIZARD: THE COMIC MAGAZINE #81 •

THE NEW TEEN TITANS: THE TERROR OF TRIGON TP

May 28, 2003 • \$17.95 • DC Comics

"The Terror of Trigon" (144 pages)

writer/editor: Marv Wolfman • pencils: George Pérez • inks: George Pérez/Romeo Tanghal •

colors: Adrienne Roy • letters: Todd Klein

Originally published in NEW TEEN TITANS Vol. 2 #1-5

SOLUS #4

Jun 2003 • \$2.99 • Crossgen Comics

"Untitled" (23 pages)

writer: Barbara Kesel • pencils: George Pérez • inks: Rick Magyar • colors: Larry Molinar

Mysteries in Space! What happens when a Sigil-Bearer makes the ultimate mistake? Lindy just learned an important truth about Andra Radiant, and now she's about to pay the price when one misstep threatens a whole world.

NEWS and EVENTS

... Continued

WIZARD: THE COMICS MAGAZINE #143

Jul 2003 • \$4.99 • Wizard Entertainment • Magazine (184 pages)
Preview of the first five pages of AVENGERS/JLA.

THE PÉREZ ARCHIVES II

Aug 2003 • Andy Mangels/CBLDF • Book (?? pages)
writer: Andy Mangels • penciler: George Pérez • inks: George Pérez
Questions or comments:
Andy Mangels • PO Box 3226 • Portland, OR 97208-3226
AmangelsSW@aol.com

CLASSIC TEEN TITANS BOX SET

Aug 2003 • DC Comics
Action figures based on Marv Wolfman and George Pérez's TEEN TITANS.
Originally sold separately as RAVEN (recolored), CYBORG (recolored), STARFIRE,
and CHANGELING.

TEEN TITANS ANIMATED SERIES

Aug 2003 • Television • Cartoon Network/Kid's WB/DC Comics
Animated cartoon series based on Marv Wolfman and George Pérez's original THE
NEW TEEN TITANS series in 1982. Series will debut in August.

MORE FUND COMICS #1

Sep 2003 • \$10.00 • The Baltimore Comic Con/Sky-Dog Press • Anthology Book
writer: (unknown)
art: Adam Hughes, Arthur Adams, Brandon Peterson, Ben Dunn, Budd Root, Butch Guice, Dan
Fraga, Erik Larsen, Greg Horn, J. Scott Campbell, Jimmy Palmiotti, John Romita, John Romita
Jr, Mark Schultz, Mike Oeming, Phil Noto, Stan Sakai, Terry Dodson, and many more.

GEORGE PÉREZ ON THE 'NET

There are countless websites with materials relating to George and his work.

Here are some premier ones, each one verified at publication time by the editor.

(Unofficial Crimson Plague Fansite) <http://liquidcross.com/crimson/>

(Yahoo Clubs - George Pérez) <http://clubs.yahoo.com/clubs/georgePerez>

(JLA Avengers Port) <http://jlaavengers.crosswinds.net>

(The Powerful Art of George Pérez) <http://www.comicbookpros.com/Perez.html>

(Vu's George Pérez Fansite - George Pérez.com) <http://vu.morrissey-solo.com/moz/Perez/>

<http://georgePerez.com/> and <http://george-Perez.com/>

(Swordquest resource) <http://www.tripoinL.org/sq/sq.html>

(George Pérez Art Appreciation Gallery) <http://Perezgallery.crosswinds.net/index.htm>

(Unofficial George Pérez Fansite) <http://www.geocities.com/Area51/Capsule/4625/>

(The Artist's Choice - Pérez Art available for purchase) <http://www.theartistschoice.com/>

(Solus fansite) <http://www.flamingtelepaths.net/radiant/>

(Custom prints-Crossgen related prints) <http://www.framegods.com/index.cfm?sitesize=small>

(Crossgen Official Site) <http://www.crossgen.com/>

(Crossgen Comics on the Web) <http://www.comicsontheweb.com/>

I know as this magazine continues I will be adding more sites to the list. Please, if you know of any, e-mail me at tlorenz101@aol.com

NEWS and EVENTS

...Continued

MODERN MASTERS #2: GEORGE PÉREZ

Aug 2003 • TwoMorrows • Book (128 pages)

writer/editor: Eric Nolen-Weathington • pencils: George Pérez • inks: George Pérez
Modern Masters Vol 2: George Pérez is scheduled for August and will be a 128-page B&W squarebound paperback. George is doing a new SOLUS cover for the book.

CRISIS ON INFINITE EARTHS OVERSIZED POSTER - New Printing

Painted by Alex Ross over pencils by George Pérez

Advance-solicited; in stores October 15.

DC Direct has gone back to press on this mammoth, sold-out, often-requested oversized poster reproduced from the stunning wraparound cover to the CRISIS ON INFINITE EARTHS collections, featuring a key identifying all 562 characters! The 65" wide x 28" high poster features a solid black border "framing" the image, which otherwise appears without any additional graphic elements or logos. Also included is a free 2-sided 11" x 17" black-and-white key naming all the meticulously painted figures on this amazing piece of artwork.

FC, Oversized Poster (65" x 28") \$24.95

Did you know...

Barbara Kesel started her comic career as an Associate Editor on the NEW TEEN TITANS back in the mid 1980s.



Don't forget to check out The Artist's Choice website for original George Pérez art, as well as the works of many other artists!

www.theartistschoice.com • You'll be glad you did!

AD SPACE AVAILABLE!

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PACESETTER... now with a wider audience!

Art must be Camera Ready or in EPS, hi resolution TIFF, or PDF Formats. Please inquire for other digital formats.

We also offer custom design service if you desire.

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Quarter Page	\$20. ⁰⁰	Back Cover (Full Page) ...	\$150. ⁰⁰
Back Cover (Half Page) ..	\$60. ⁰⁰	Back Cover (Quarter)	\$45. ⁰⁰
Classified ads (up to 25 words. 25¢ each additional word) \$3. ⁰⁰			

PACESETTER

The *GEORGE PÉREZ* Magazine

*Your comments
are always
welcome!*

Tony,

I received my copies of PACESETTER today. Thank You. I appreciated the acknowledgement in the mag but it wasn't necessary. I am a life long fan of Mr. Pérez and just wanted to help you with your mag. Great Issue!!!!

I believe when photos are published in any form the photographer needs to be acknowledged if known. I believe this has to do with copyrights. I had a similar experience working on my church's photo directory. (The picture I sent you was by an anonymous photographer but with my camera)

I agree with you about fan art. I'm sure a lot of people have been inspired by Mr. Pérez that read your mag. Brett T. calling them "fifth rate Pérez clones" was kind of harsh but it showed that you showcase a good display of letters in the feedback section.

I really enjoy the *Pérez Fans Around the World* feature. It shows his effect on people around the world. You had a nice blend of pro interviews and fan articles.

Here are some suggestions for contents and theme issues.

1. Interview with other pros that have been influenced by George's work i.e. Jim Lee, Alex Ross, Rob Liefeld, Todd McFarlane, Phil Jimenez, etc.
2. I had a thought how about an "Awards Issue." Dedicate an entire issue to the many awards Mr. Pérez has won in his 30 year career. There are a lot; i.e.: Eagle Awards, Amazing Heroes, Wizard Fan Awards, Jack Kirby Awards, etc. This would be great if you included the pros' thoughts and feelings in this issue. It would be a great honor to Mr. Pérez. Not only is he well honored by the fan's awards but by his peers as well.
3. Crisis "20th Anniversary" Issue. January '05. Behind the scenes info on this masterpiece with George, Marv and Len interview.
4. "Superman Issue." Covers George's work on the Superman titles in the late '80s. Possible interviews Roger Stern, Dan Jurgens
5. Future Imperfect(Hulk). This

masterpiece the longest pencil and ink job Mr. Pérez had done before JLA/Avengers. Possible interviews Peter David and Carol Flynn (George's wife). She was the catalyst for George approaching Peter about the working together.

6. Have a Fan Fun Page. Maybe a jumble, word search or crossword puzzle that test the fan's knowledge of Mr. Pérez in the issue they just read. I know there are computer programs to create these games. Have a contest to give the feedback page a name i.e. *Letters to Tony* or *PACESETTER Comments*. This is one of those comic book and magazine traditions.

Best of Luck and I hope you can get an interview with George, Marv and Len for the Titans issue.

Best
Eric Sellers

Man—have you been a big help over the last few issues! People like you are what this magazine is all about. You have a lot of

Did you know...

SOLUS #1 was the 300th shipped-on-time book published by Crossgen.



great ideas, some that I thought of and some I haven't... and that's what great about getting other opinions from other people. I'm sure at one point or another all those suggestion will be done. I'm not sure about the last one. I don't know about writing in the book. What does everyone else feel about that?

Hi Tony,

I just picked up PACESETTER #1.

Awesome job! You have me hooked. I have loved George since his Titans days. Those stories are my heart!

Thanks,
Kirk Strine

Thanks for the support.

Tony,

By the way, I was reading FANTASTIC FOUR 187 today and saw it contained a letter from Kurt Busiek. Its so funny that way back in 1977 when Kurt was a fan, that he had NO IDEA he'd one day be writing AVENGERS with the self-same Mr. Pérez who drew that very issue.

Tim Markin

Hey the pros got to start somewhere. There could be some future pros reading my magazine, I hope.

Dear Tony:

I had a few ideas for future articles in PACESETTER that I thought I would run by you. I'm not necessarily looking to write these articles myself, but I thought they would be ideas you might assign to other contributors...

Interview with Marv Wolfman: this is a must for the TITANS-theme issue. It would be nice to have interviews with other TITANS collaborators such as Len Wein and Romeo Tanghal as well.

Interview with George's wife: what is it like being married to George? She could also discuss her own work, including the costumes she makes for George's characters.

The Pérez Estate: imagine an article and photo-shoot on George's home in Sanford. Having been there a few times myself, I thought other fans might like to see how George lives and what his studio looks like (this is one I could work on, since I live near Sanford and have been to George's house before).

Danny DeAngelo

Keep those ideas coming, the more the merrier, I want to put out the best possible magazine and I can't do it with out your help and ideas. More great ideas Danny that will be used.

Hi Tony,

I wanted to let you know that I received the first issue of PACESETTER in the mail the

other day and I'm still going through it. I must say: what an incredible magazine! And that's not just because my response to the issues question is right there on page 15. I want to thank you for the issue and also for printing my answer. It really made my day, week, and month.

While I never cared too much for the Ultraverse, it was nice to read about what it was all about. The only reason I picked up some of the Ultraverse comics was because of George Pérez. If it weren't for him I would have passed on by without even thinking twice about taking a look. I think that says something about his ability to attract people to check out something that they might not otherwise look at.

Mark Tillson

I think that PACESETTER #1 was a professional and purposeful publication that was packed from front to back with insights and information to feed the fanboy in all of us for the work of George Pérez. If anyone wants more, then be patient and support the continued publication of such a wonderful and exciting resource. Tony Lorenz and his team should be commended for their commitment to fanboys (and girls) every where because no other artist (other than Jack Kirby) will get this kind of documentary and exposure. Five stars, two thumbs, and a great big thank you for PACESETTER #1... long live the king!!

Jeff Weaver

I'm glad you can't see me, I'm blushing, thank you.

Tony,

As usual, it was fantastic reading articles by other fans as well as people in the business who have worked with Mr. Pérez. The commentary from fans and professionals is a testament to how much he truly has influenced the comic book industry and the imaginations of all of us who dabble.

The layouts, as usual, remain of the highest quality. It is very evident this is a labor of love for you because it is done exceptionally well.

As I was reading letters to the editor, I was struck that some people requested to not have fan art in the magazine. Although I understand this individual's reasoning, I think it would be cool to see what other amateur artists have done because Mr. Pérez inspired them. Perhaps you could include a few pages of artwork, but maybe have small versions of the fan art to have about 4 pictures per page. In that regard, the

fans could continue to show their appreciation to Mr. Pérez through their creativity and not obfuscate the work of the main man himself.

Beyond that, the book looks great. You have done a phenomenal job and I tip my hat to you!

Gary Beck

Thanks Gary

Hi Tony,

Loved the two issues of GEORGE PÉREZ NEWSLETTER and PACESETTER is fantastic as well. Issue 1's showcasing of Pérez's odds and ends was a real treat. I always liked George's indy work such as ULTRAFORCE and that Codename Firearm piece was about as geared as you can get.

Dan Sehn

That's what I was shooting for the indy issue, besides some very bad scans on my part, I think the issue turned out pretty well.

Tony

Wow, what a magazine. I loved the new PACESETTER: THE GEORGE PEREZ MAGAZINE #1. Great cover, front and back, nice glossy finish. The interviews were great also, I loved the whole book.

Here's a few things I would like to see in future issues:

1. More interviews from other pros that have been influenced by George.
2. Pen pal address section
3. Art contest
4. Evolution of George's art feature.
5. Print more penciled pages of George's work.
6. George Pérez photo cover. *(Editor's note: This is Marcus' favorite idea!!)*
7. George's "How to Draw" feature.

Gary Smith

Gary thanks for the comments and feedback. Once again a lot of great ideas that will be used in future issues, I really like the "How to draw" feature, I'm going to work on that one for sure. Thanks for all the help on my magazine.

Did you know...

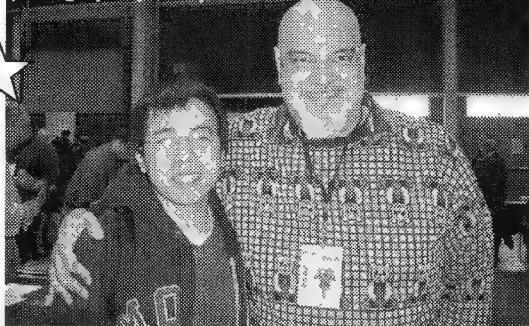
CROSSGEN isn't the first Florida comic company George has worked for — he was the artist on Tekno's I-BOT comic.



PLANET COMICON 2003 REPORT

March 29-30, 2003
Overland Park Internationall
Trade Center
115th & Metcalf
Overland Park, KS
www.planetcomicon.com

Vu and George Pérez in Kansas (Mar 29, 2003)
photograph by Rocky Parsons



Overland Park, Kansas, is about two states away from where I live, so originally, I wasn't going to attend this convention... but at the last minute I decided to go for it.

I had to do some researches before the trip, including how far the convention actually was. By using Rand McNally (www.randmcnally.com), I was able to plan out the road trip, including how long it would take (8 hours) and the exact distance (450 miles). The trip there, we followed the exact instructions of the internet map, which I don't recommend because as with Yahoo's Mapquest, they are sometime inaccurate. McNally eventually did take us where we wanted to go, albeit a little longer than necessary.

I also extensively used the Planet Comicon's excellent website to determine which hotels were around. I had decided on staying at the Embassy Suites Hotel, because it was the cheapest rate (\$99 for four people). For the price you pay, it's really nice: you get WiFi high speed internet free plus a personally made breakfast, as well as other amenities such as a pool and an exercising room. I will certainly stay at another Embassy the next time I'm traveling.

The entry fee to the convention was a little pricey - \$12. I know the cost of the ticket pays for the rental of the convention, the cost of

advertisements, as well as the artists and actors that were paid to attend the convention, but I could not help but think that anything above \$10 is a rip off.

It doesn't matter because I was meeting George Perez for the first time that day. I got in and scouted the artist area. The tables were set in four, forming squares. In the back were movie and television stars and in the front were comic book creators. Personally, I don't think the Playboy bunnies should've been there, as a lot of convention goers were parents with their underage children. They eventually covered the inappropriate adult art and posters with post-it notes over the boobs.

By the time I saw where Perez was sitting, it was already a crowd of people gathering around. I stood in line behind Rocky, who told me that he was told by Perez that he was supposed to be the last one in line because George had to do some sketches for the Comic Book Legal Defense Fund (CBLDF) charity auction.

I didn't mind waiting for him to come back,

but I did want to announce to him that I was at the convention. So I just said, "Hey George" (he looked up). "It's me, Vu." He was confused at first, but then his face lit up. You can tell he was really pleased to finally have met me, as much as I was to meet him!

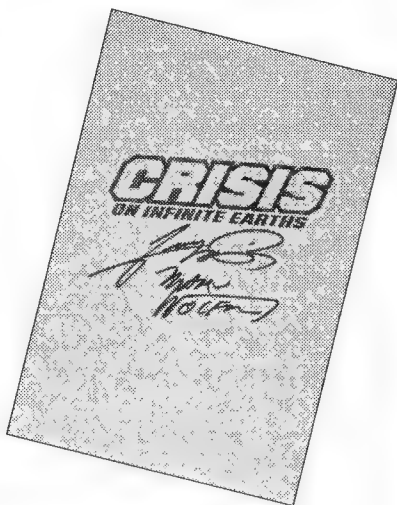
I asked Rocky Parsons, who was standing in front of me, if he could take a photograph of us, and George asked for the same on his camera, because he wanted to show his wife. I knew he was already busy with the Comic Book Legal Defense Fund auction sketches so I said I'd go and come back later.

Nothing really interested me because I know that most vendors marked up their prices on the first day but then slash their prices on the last day because they don't want to bring home all their inventories. Sometime you can haggle prices, but for that day, I just didn't feel like spending too much. I mostly stuck with the \$1 or less bins. I bought some *American Flagg!* graphic novels and some Heavy Metal books (\$1 and \$2, respectively).

I came back to George's table, which was now just full of people standing in line. There were a couple of people who had boxes of things for George to sign. Although George signs everything, I think people who bring a bucket of comics should be more considerate to other

fans. You should just limit yourself to three or four items. I had bought *CRISIS ON INFINITE EARTHS* Hardcover for Marv Wolfman & George to sign. Marv was conveniently sitting next to George.

Meeting one of your idols can be scary, right? Not at all, at least not with George. He makes it seem like we're old pals. As said by everyone who's ever met him, he is the nicest guy in the world. I am looking forward to meeting up with George again really soon.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Vu Nguyen's first real comic book was CRISIS ON INFINITE EARTHS #1, which instantly made him a fan of George Pérez's art. Seeing a need for Pérez information and checklist on the internet, he started a little George Pérez website in December 1998. It is now the best source of Pérez news and information anywhere.

Visit www.george-perez.com

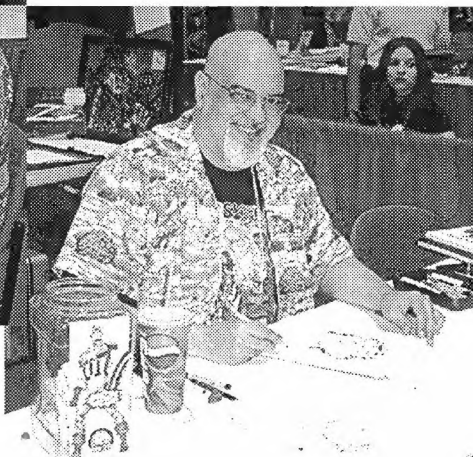
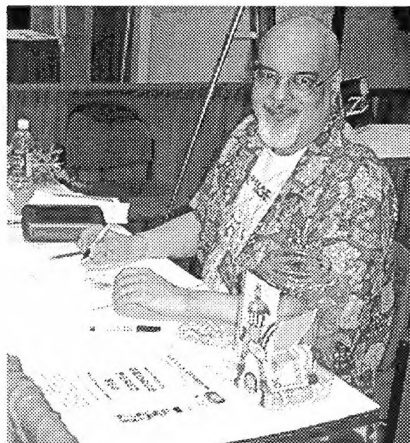
PHOTO GALLERY

We need photos for future issues. So, if you have any photos of The Maestro, please submit them, and you'll get the usual perks!



This is Danny D'Angelo at the MegaCon in Orlando with PACESETTER #1

Here are two pictures of George at his usual best—drawing for charity!



Photos by Tony Lorenz

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